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THE

CATECHIST'S MANUAL

AND

FAMILY LECTURER.

THE

CATECHIST'S MANUAL,

AND

FAMILY LECTURER;

BEING

AN ARRANGEMENT AND EXPLANATION

OF

ST. MARK'S GOSPEL,

FOR PURPOSES OF

MISSIONARY AND DOMESTIC INSTRUCTION.

BY THE

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HINDS

PREFACE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the many advantages of education which candidates for Orders enjoy, there are some points of their *professional instruction*, which make no part of an Academical course. The young clergyman is generally called on to commence a full course of ministerial duty, qualified indeed with a competency of learning, but without that gradual practical training, by which men of all other professions are initiated into business. Clients are slow in trusting the inexperienced barrister; and the young physician's practice is limited for many years to a small number of patients; but the young minister of the Gospel is, for the most part, summoned from the abstract speculations

of a college life, to enter at once on the new and untried routine of parochial business and of religious instruction.

If this is felt as a difficulty in the discharge of the more regular duties which attach to an English curacy, how much more appalling is the scene which presents itself to the young Missionary or Catechist. He often has not enjoyed even the same previous advantages of learned study; and can never have the same fixed precedents to appeal to, in his first uncertain career. Anxious and eager to fulfil his trust, yet conscious of unskilfulness, and afraid of committing himself through inexperience, he is always exposed to the risk of being disheartened in the very threshold of his professional life, or else, of acquiring a rash confidence in his undisciplined exertions.

Whether all this admits of being obviated by any system of ministerial training which may be adopted in our colleges at Calcutta

and Barbados, is a matter which deserves the serious consideration of the benevolent and enlightened Society under whose guardianship these institutions are. My present undertaking only applies to one part of the difficulty—the want of practice in composing Sermons, expounding Scripture, conversing on religious topics with the uneducated; in short, "dividing" or dispensing "the word of God."

The acquirement of this qualification is quite distinct from the acquirement of religious knowledge; and a great deal of this latter may be possessed, and the possessor be still at a loss how to make a ready and effectual use of it. Among the fully educated clergy accordingly there are many who have recourse to published Sermons; but still more it may be expected of those who have not graduated at our Universities. It is often the only resource they have, and in employing it, they are not unfrequently led to suppose, (agreeably to the maxim so injudiciously in-

culcated by Addison[a],) that it is a proof of modesty to preach sermons which have received the approbation of good judges, rather than their own crude essays. An indolent habit steals insensibly on the preacher. Occupied perhaps with much distracting business, he feels less and less disposed to apply himself to the task of habitually preaching and lecturing from his own stores; and his addresses consequently, in and out of the pulpit, never attain that forcible character, which can only be given by the genuine expression of one's own feelings and convictions.

My first object in preparing the following work, has been to provide a manual for catechists, and young clergymen generally, who may be experiencing the difficulty I have noticed. It is designed to assist them in their first course of preaching and lecturing, by furnishing the substance of a series of sermons or lectures, in a form requiring just

[a] Spectator, No. 106.

so much alteration and addition of original matter, as to lead to independent composition. I have been desirous of putting into their hands a book, from which they may provide themselves, not with the Sermons of another, but with materials which may be readily worked up into Sermons of their own; and—what is of more permanent consequence—may lead them on to the early practice of depending on themselves.

With this main object in view, others have occurred to me, as capable of being combined.

Laymen as well as clergymen are sometimes required to perform a simple act of kindness or duty—that of reading the Bible to the sick, the aged, or the ignorant. On these occasions, some explanatory remarks or brief application seem necessary as the reader proceeds; and without an attempt to add this, he feels that his task has been imperfectly performed. Short sermons, or detached notes,

by no means form a substitute. What is needed is a perpetual exposition intermixed with the reading and going on with it.

But it is not to the chambers of the sick or the cottages of the poor that this need is confined. Masters and heads of families are bound by their situation to combine religious instruction with daily family worship. A passage read from the Bible is an essential part of the religious exercises of a family; and no occasion can be more suitable than this, for introducing any remarks which may serve to explain the meaning of the passage, connect it with other parts of Scripture, or apply it to the practical business of life.

A Family Bible might seem at first sight to be sufficient for all this; and, without making an invidious distinction in favour of any one, it may be fairly admitted, that more than one of those in circulation contain a rich store of commentary, and may be consulted throughout with edification. But what is

called a Family Bible, is not, after all, a *family book*, in the sense of a manual from which a father or master may read and expound to his domestic circle. From its very form, it is rather calculated for reference in solitary study; and is, in fact, more frequently consulted by the members of a family *individually*, than used as the family lecture-book.

Such at least has been the result of my own observation; and to provide the sort of book which in this point of view is needed, is accordingly one object which I have contemplated. The following work is, in substance and in form, a series of Readings from the New Testament, such as it has probably been required of many, besides clergymen and catechists, to give, either continuously, or on some occasional need: and if its publication shall facilitate the performance of this duty for any so circumstanced, a very important purpose will have been accomplished.

To have attempted to render such a book alike suited, without change, to the various capacities of all missionary congregations, as well as of all the members of a family party, composed as it often is of adults, juniors, and mere children, of the educated and the ignorant, would have been plainly fruitless. My plan has been, to abstain from all such comment (except in a few short notes) as it would require acquaintance with the original Greek to understand; without always supposing those addressed to be entire strangers to a liberal education. It is the catechist's and family man's lecture-book; and they will, it is hoped, always find the matter disposed of, in a form very easy to be transferred, if needful, to homelier language, and otherwise levelled to the understandings of the weak and ignorant.

Occasional deviation from the manual is indeed an exercise, which I should be as unwilling to prevent, if it were practicable, in the family lecturer's case, as in the catechist's.

It is a part of his duty, which may and ought to be rendered easy, but never superseded. Christianity is thoroughly a social religion; and for one who is reading the Bible for the benefit of a circle of friends to give a social character to his task, he must occasionally say something that is his own; he must vary or follow up the remarks of his manual, and express his assent or dissent to the views which it suggests. He must do more—he must encourage and invite others to contribute their share of remark, to ask for further explanation of what is not understood, and freely to communicate their own suggestions and impressions.

The practice is immensely important. This religious intercourse is not only, it should be remembered, the discharge of a duty which each individual owes to God; but is a principle of domestic union, which divine goodness has superadded to the ties of nature and of worldly pursuit; and has added, we may

hope, for the express purpose of uniting a family *as such* for ever. When the ordinary course of society, not to mention the ruder mischances of fortune, has dispersed, after a few years of union, the party which assembled round the father's fire side, what is the natural fate of early affection, kindred pursuits, and all that mingles in the spell of *home?* If as children of this world only we have been united, the bond of union may be more or less delightful, may be more or less lasting, but it must yield to this world's decaying influence. Do we wish to rivet it for ever? Do we wish to carry it on to a period, when we shall be "as the angels which are in heaven?" We must begin, in an earthly home, the intercourse of angels; and, by exercising together a common faith and a common hope, prepare to enjoy together a common heaven.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following series of readings from the New Testament will embrace St. Mark's Gospel; but continual reference will be made to the narratives of St. Matthew, St. Luke, and St. John, and occasionally their statements introduced.

The selection of St. Mark's Gospel is not merely accidental. Its design and character seem to fit it for being first continuously read and studied. St. Mark only has confined his narrative to that portion of Evangelical history which was strictly and properly *the Gospel of Jesus Christ*—the subject of apostolical testimony. His narrative embraces the period within which Christ's ministry was included—the compass of events for preserving and attesting which the Apostles were ordained witnesses. This period commenced with our Lord's baptism, and ended with his ascension.

Not that St. Mark has attempted to relate all that the Apostles saw and heard of their Master during that time. This indeed is not done by any one, nor by all together. St. John, who wrote last, and, as it is said, with a view of supplying certain omissions of the preceding three—even St. John does not pretend to have completed the full and entire Gospel narrative. He only put on record that, which, together with the accounts before given, was sufficient and right for the guidance of our faith; and this he did, not of himself, but under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, which was promised to the Apostles in their dispensation of the Gospel. "There are also many other things," writes St. John at the end of his Gospel, "which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written[a]."

St. Mark indeed relates fewer facts than St. Matthew or St. Luke, and is less circumstantial in his account of those which he does relate than either of the other three Evangelists. The principle, which appears to have been contemplated

[a] John xxi. 25.

in his selection of facts, (and the same remark will equally apply to St. Matthew and St. Luke, although not perhaps to St. John,) was this, *to preserve the tissue and connected character of our Lord's ministry.* As this is a matter of great importance, and as the Gospel histories cannot be rightly understood without continual reference to it, it may be necessary at once to explain what is meant by this tissue-like connection in Christ's ministry.

Our Lord, it will be observed, very gradually communicated his revelations to his followers. Whether it was, that their prejudices were so strong, as to require that a display of truths which ran counter to those prejudices, should be very slowly and gradually made—or that it was done agreeably to the rule of "giving to him that hath," of rewarding faith in a little by making the believer acquainted with more—or that both these and other grounds existed; the fact is undeniable. At first, we find him perhaps merely hinting obscurely at some doctrine to be embraced, some event that it was expedient to bring to pass; then, as the first reluctance of prejudice or alarm is a little subdued, the

same lesson is repeated, and made somewhat more explicit; lastly, before the close of his ministry, it is fully and clearly stated; or else, attention and interest having been strongly excited, the promise is given, that, when the Comforter shall come, he shall teach all the truth. This was the method of instruction adopted with respect to his being the Christ; with respect to his death; the spiritual nature of his kingdom; the abolition of the Jewish law; and, in short, with respect to all that he taught.

It was a method rendered more striking and more intelligible by our Lord's manner of teaching. He not only instructed his followers by his discourses and conversation, but also by his actions; either explaining the meaning of those actions, or else leaving it to be gathered from something previously said or done by him, which the action naturally recalled to mind. Thus, when he washed his disciples' feet, he explained to them what he meant by the symbolical action; but when he set a child in the midst of them, he expected that they would understand what he meant by their becoming little children, through those other lessons of his in which the metaphor

of being born again and the like had occurred. Almost all his miracles seem to have had this secondary character. In some it is explained, as in the cure of the blind man related in the ninth chapter of St. John; but in most instances, the connection with his verbal instruction furnishing a ready key, the meaning was left to be the reward of docility and attention.

Now taking this view of the character of our Lord's teaching, it is clear that whoever undertook to record the course of his ministry, must have made his selection of facts with reference to this principle, whatever other object he may likewise have had in view—that is, he must have selected and retained enough of our Lord's words and actions, and of the incidents of his life, to preserve this thread of progressive meaning, this tissue of Gospel revelation. In order to furnish a survey of Christ's ministry as a whole, all that was strictly requisite, was to record some portion of each progressive stage of instruction; and to take care that these parts should refer, in the way explained, the one to the other. And this is precisely what not only St. Mark will be found to have done, but also St. Matthew and St. Luke;

and it is to this principle perhaps that the latter alludes, when he prefaces his narrative by saying, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand *to set forth in order* a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses." St. John's Gospel requires a different view, which need not be here discussed.

It will be found however, as we proceed through St. Mark's Gospel, that although it contains in itself enough to preserve the connection of our Lord's teaching, still much light may be gathered from statements omitted by him and recorded by the others.

The plan of reading his Gospel will be simply this—to distribute each chapter into portions according to the various topics embraced by it; and to follow up each portion with some explanatory remarks.

In adopting the established division of the Bible into chapter and verse, it may be necessary to caution some few against supposing that this division is essential to the genuine character of the Scriptures, or that it was originally used.

It was introduced in a comparatively late period of the Church, for convenience in reading and referring; and on this ground only it is now retained. It is, on the whole, a good and useful arrangement, although it will be found occasionally to interfere with the course of an argument, or the thread of an historical statement.

CHAPTER I.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.

Ver. 1.

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In what sense the Gospel begins with the baptism of Jesus has been noticed in the introductory remarks. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the meaning in which St. Mark here employs the phrase, is his ministry, or the glad tidings proclaimed by him. Accordingly, a little further in this first chapter, our Lord is represented, immediately after his baptism and temptation, as preaching the Gospel, and saying, "the kingdom of God is at hand."

Gospel is an old Saxon word meaning "good news;" and the title of good news appears to have been affixed to the message of mercy from God to man in Christ, by the angel who said to the shepherds of Bethlehem on the night of the nativity, "I bring you *good tidings* of great joy[c]."

[c] Luke ii. 10.

It is not however uniformly employed in the same sense. Sometimes it is used for the whole of Christianity; sometimes, as in this passage, for our Lord's ministry.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S OFFICE.

Ver. 2—8.

As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; and preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

It will be observed that the Jews very readily flocked to John. It is said that "all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, went out to him." All Judæa knew that the time specified by the prophets for the Messiah's appearance was come; and were ready to listen to any per-

son who should present himself either as the Messiah, or as Elias, whom they expected to precede the Messiah, agreeably to the prophecy of Malachi[4].

Two circumstances respecting John are noticed by St. Mark—his dress and habits of life—his testimony to Jesus.

As Elias, in whose "spirit and power" he came, lived much in the wilderness, and was often secluded from public notice, this circumstance in the life of John was probably intended to direct the attention of the Jews to him as the person in whom Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled. Malachi had said that "Elias should come before the great and terrible day of the Lord," meaning thereby the *Elias* of the new dispensation, the great prophet of the latter days; even as we should speak of any very distinguished living admiral, as the Nelson of his age. Now John wrought no miracles, and made no assertion respecting his claim to be the Elias. It was the more needful therefore, that even the minutest points of coincidence between Elijah and him should have been brought under notice. If the

[4] Chap. iv. 5.

attention awakened by these points of resemblance had caused the Jews to suspend their judgment, and to wait for further evidence, then their candour and docility would in time have been rewarded. For as John bare witness to Jesus, without performing any miracles, so Jesus afterwards bare witness to John, and confirmed his witness by miracles. Accordingly John did not preach *faith* but repentance. It was Jesus and the ministers of the Gospel who preached *belief;* because they and not John presented *miraculous proofs* to their hearers. All that John's ministry seems designed to accomplish was, "to *prepare* the way of the Lord;" to cause men to lend a candid and attentive ear to him; to suspend their decision; and to admit the force of his miraculous evidence when displayed to them.

The Baptist's testimony respecting our Lord was, that he was mightier than himself: and, that instead of a mere baptism by water such as his, there was to be a baptism with the Holy Ghost. From this declaration you would infer that some new connection with the Holy Ghost is acquired by Christian baptism, such as no other baptism could

communicate, no not even John the Baptist's; although "among them that were born of women there had not arisen a greater than John[e]." Accordingly we read in the Acts, that some whom John had baptized, were re-baptized by St. Paul, in order to admit them to this privilege[f]; and we find our Lord, in his last charge to his apostles, not only commanding them to baptize all nations, but declaring that "he that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved[g]." It is not of course that there is any *charm* in the waters of baptism, nor that it affects us like a medicinal application; but the ceremony is a fulfilment of a condition, which it has pleased Christ to enjoin on us; and he who complies with it, "is saved" or admitted to the rights and privileges of a Christian, not because he is affected by the water, but because he has performed a specific act of obedience to Christ. It is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God," in which, according to St. Peter, the saving efficacy of Baptism consists[h].

[e] Matth. xi. 11. [f] Acts xix. [g] Mark xvi. 16.
[h] I Pet. iii. 21.

CHRIST'S BAPTISM.

Ver. 9—11.

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

In St. Matthew it is mentioned, that when Jesus approached John to demand baptism of him, John objected, "saying, I have need to be baptized of thee." But Jesus told him, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;" and upon this John baptized him[1]. If therefore it be asked, why our Lord, who had no sins to repent of, and who was himself to impart to mankind the Holy Ghost, should have been baptized, and should have had attached to his baptism the emblem of his union with the Holy Spirit; the proper answer must surely be that which he himself gave to the scruples of John. It was done "because thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"—because this was henceforth the established mode of attaining the

[1] Matt. iii. 14.

means of righteousness or justification[k]. Christ must be considered in this, and in several acts of his life, as fulfilling the office of pattern to his Church, and to each individual; and as doing, not what was needful for him, but what was needful because "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He was baptized; and immediately his union with the Holy Spirit was manifested by the descent of the Shechinah, —the brilliant flame which denoted God's presence—to shew, that by following this appointed mode, we too should enjoy fellowship with the same Spirit. Hence in allusion to a similar manifestation attached to the infant Church on the day of Pentecost, he speaks of their being "*baptized* with the Holy Ghost[l]," the very language of John the Baptist before he baptized the Lord. It is in allusion to his declaration on this occasion—that he was baptized because "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"—that he is said by the apostle to have been "justified" or "made righteous in the Spirit[m]."

[k] In the original Greek, these two terms are expressed by the same word, δικαιοσύνη.

[l] Acts i. 5. and xi. 16. [m] 2 Tim. iii. 16.

The Holy Ghost is said to have descended on Him "like a dove," not meaning that there was the semblance of a dove, (for that would not have been recognized as the token of divine presence;) but, that the holy light, or "glory of the Lord," the established symbol of God's revelation of himself, descended on him either in shape like a dove, or else with that easy motion with which a dove alights on any object. It was, no doubt, the same brilliant emblem, which, in the form of many tongues, descended on the Church afterwards at the day of Pentecost; and which, in the long series of God's communications with man, had been the chosen sign of his immediate presence. The cherubim that guarded the gate of Eden held a flaming sword; it was out of a burning bush that the Lord first called unto Moses; mysterious lightnings played around the summit of Mount Sinai when the Law was preparing, as they afterwards struck Saul blind at his conversion; it was a pillar of fire that guided the Israelites through the wilderness; and a glorious light that was first attached to their tabernacle, and afterwards abode in their temple, where God fixed his name. And now, in like manner, when

God visited again his people, the Shechinah was lighted in the new temple of Christ's body; enveloped him at the Transfiguration; and lastly descended to fill his new body the Church, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the present earthly tabernacle of God.

THE TEMPTATION.

Ver. 12, 13.

And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts: and the angels ministered unto him.

The account of the Temptation is given in detail by St. Matthew and St. Luke. The consideration of the circumstances comprised in this account is not called for, in the view suggested by St. Mark, whose Gospel we are at present taking as our main guide. Still it is requisite to point out that this event, whether considered briefly or in detail, claims our attention under two different aspects. I. As it was a real and mysterious trial which Christ underwent in connection with his office and ministry. II. As it was an example, perhaps a symbol, of our own exposure to temptation, both as a Church and as

individuals; and also of our power of resistance through him.

Of these two views the last only is immediately practical; the other only so, as it is connected with it. Throughout our Lord's ministry indeed, his character and conduct may be considered in this twofold aspect; and it is important that the two views should not be confounded. Of Christ's individual intercourse with the Father; of the mode in which the agency of Satan was directed against him, and was counteracted by him; of the support he derived, or the pangs he suffered; of all in short that relates to his absolute nature and condition, we are told scarcely any thing explicit. The notices are only such, as are called forth from the occasional contact, into which the practical view of our Lord is brought with these matters. It is what he has done for us; what he has done which we are to imitate, or otherwise practically apply, that is the theme of Gospel history; and this is very plain in the account of the Temptation, as in all the rest of the history. It is only a mystery, in the same sense in which the whole of Christ's life and conduct is a mystery; that is,

contemplated in a point of view that only accidentally meets us, and is not intended as a part of "the way and the truth."

THE CALL OF SIMON, ANDREW, JAMES, AND JOHN.

Ver. 16—20.

Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

In conformity with the view given of the probable design and character of St. Mark's Gospel, he naturally relates as the first act of our Lord's ministry the call of apostles—the appointment of those who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses" of his Gospel.

It will be observed, that these agents of Christ, although designed for a mission which was in time to embrace various Gentile nations, even all the world, and not only Judæa or the Jews; were,

without any exception, all Jews. This may appear at first strange, and somewhat at variance with that nice choice of means adapted to every end, which is discoverable in the redemption, not less than in the creation of the world. But on reflection, it cannot but be allowed, that there was a peculiar propriety and fitness in this arrangement. It was among the first duties of an apostle, to point out the intimate and various connection which subsists between the old and the new dispensation; to shew, in what way, the former was a preparatory measure to the latter, the blossom that made way for the fruit. Now it is clear, that, in the then state of the world, this could be done naturally, by none but persons educated in the habits of the Law; and miraculous means seem never to have been unnecessarily resorted to.

We shall observe too, that, like those whose appointment is here mentioned, all the apostles, except St. Paul, were from the lower ranks of society, and without more education than their creed as Jews required. The expediency of this, in removing all possible suspicion, that the propagation of Christianity was owing to human wis-

dom, is obvious. Accordingly St. Paul, who is the only exception, continually alludes to those circumstances about his conversion and ministry, which shew that his case does not affect the argument. He was the *last* of the apostles, and therefore could not have contributed his learning and talents to set the scheme on foot; nay, they were employed to oppose it. His conversion was not the gradual result of reasoning and deliberate study, but of an awful, sudden, and conspicuous act of divine interposition. He retained his natural powers of eloquence and learning after his conversion; but appeals, in common with the others, to the proper credentials of an apostle—the miracles which he wrought. Hence the recurrence of such passages as these in his writings—which are doubtless not the barren display of humility, but a needful caution. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand: by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins

according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed[n]." "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect[o]." "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things

[n] 1 Cor. xv. 1—11. [o] 1 Cor. i. 17.

which are mighty[p]." "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God[q]."

One point requires notice in our Lord's call of these apostles, mentioned by St. Mark as the first. He found Simon and Andrew casting a net into the sea; and, in reference to their occupation, he describes their future office as that of *fishers* of men. This mode of teaching appears to have been very common with our Lord, as we shall frequently have occasion to notice. He made his instruction at once more intelligible and more lively, by adopting for the images of his figurative and metaphorical language, objects present to his hearers, or scenes and occurrences which were passing at the time. Thus, in his

[p] 1 Cor. i. 27. [q] 1 Cor. ii. 1—5.

interview with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, he told her, while she was drawing water, that he had *living water;* and on the same occasion he spoke to his disciples of the fields being white to the harvest, pointing no doubt to the crowds who were returning with the woman from the city to see him, and alluding to the state of the real corn fields which were likewise before their eyes[r].

JESUS'S MODE OF TEACHING.

Ver. 21, 22.

And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

The circumstance noticed in the last section may be considered as one of the characteristic and distinct marks of our Lord's teaching. So too the peculiarity, which has also been pointed out—that he made use of his miracles, not only for the purpose of evidence, but for conveying instruction by hints and expressive symbols. To us his parables too have an air of peculiarity. But it is not to any of these points which the

[r] John iv.

Evangelist alludes, when he describes his hearers as astonished at his "doctrine" or teaching, and alleges as a reason, that "he taught as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes." The novelty and singularity of which he speaks is, that Jesus assumed the office not of expounding Scripture merely, as all the doctors of the Law, but of making assertions on his own independent authority. The Scribes were accustomed to teach thus, "It is written," or "It is said by them of old time;" but Christ taught thus, "I say unto you." It was no doubt, in order to shew this independent authority, that, while he generally conformed to the Jewish law, he occasionally violated it, so as to attract notice to the violation; asserting thereby, as he did also, in plain words, "the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath;" "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS.

Ver. 23—45.

And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come

out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had

spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

It has been often remarked, that our Lord's miracles are characterised, by evidencing not only divine power, but divine mercy; and that while Moses and other mere servants of God dealt out alike miraculous kindness and miraculous severity; in the case of the Son of God, the divine interposition was all in unison with the promise of the heavenly host, "peace on earth, and good will towards men," as well as "glory to God in the highest."

In the miracles here enumerated by St. Mark, this feature is very obvious. The first objects of Christ's power, are objects of his mercy—the demoniacs, the diseased, and especially the deplorable and loathsome case of the lepers.

But this is not the only character which the

miracles of Christ exhibit when compared with others. Their didactic use—their application as hints and instructive signs—has been noticed; and besides this very remarkable point about them, they were often acts which seemed to encroach as it were on God's peculiar and reserved province. By them were sometimes accomplished things which the habitual notions of the Jews associated with the immediate agency of God himself. Of this kind was the cure of the leprosy. It was a disorder which we find was looked on as a sign of divine displeasure, and accordingly its removal was connected with a religious ceremony, which denoted that God himself had removed, as he had inflicted it. It was under this impression that when Naaman was sent to the king of Israel to be cured of this disorder, the king of Israel exclaimed, "Am I God to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy[1]?" When therefore our Lord undertook of himself to heal this disease, he not only proved that God worked with him, but indicated that he was assuming a privilege which God had hitherto

[1] 2 Kings v. 7.

reserved. He indicated his divine nature. So too when he cast out devils, and shewed thereby his power over the author of all evil.

Another circumstance about these miracles is their conformity to certain prophecies which foretold the Messiah's career. Such is this of Isaiah. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing[a]." On this conformity there will be several convenient opportunities of saying more.

With respect to the miracles recorded here, one observation can hardly escape you. In the case of the first demoniac whom Christ cured; in the case of the many out of whom he afterwards cast out devils; in the case of the leper cleansed; in all these cases, he enjoined secresy, or, at least, forbad the publication of the miracles. He charged the persons healed "to say nothing to any man," and he "suffered not the devils to speak because they knew him."

This be it remembered was the *beginning* of his ministry; and his revelations of himself were

[a] Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

gradual, and the evidences also, by which the truth of those revelations was supported. The expediency of all this has been already pointed out[t]; and the care with which he pursued the system will be obvious as we go on. He dispensed both truth and evidence, as men could bear the one, and required the other.

[t] Page 8.

CHAPTER II.

CONNECTION OF CHRIST'S LESSONS.

It has been already remarked, that, throughout the review of our Lord's ministry, it would be necessary to bear in mind the *gradual* and *connected* line of instruction which he adopted; to observe, how he proceeded from hints and obscure intimations to such declarations of himself and of his Gospel as were more and more explicit. This was done, by means of a continual variation of the forms in which the same lesson was conveyed; and also, by means of different combinations of the same truths. Thus, what was at one time taught in a parable, in another was taught by an allusion to present scenes and passing events; as when he told Simon and Andrew that he would make them *fishers of men;* or again by some third form of instruction; every succeeding lesson being more explicit than the preceding. With the same object in view, what

was taught in one lesson was *alluded* to in another on a different topic, so as to keep up a connection throughout all his teaching.

Having now seen the *commencement* of Christ's ministry, as contained in the preceding chapter, we may expect to find, on our arrival at the second, some illustration of this principle. Having been now presented with the first lessons of our Lord, we naturally look to discover, in each succeeding one, some such reference to the preceding as has been described. We may expect too, as we advance in the series of continued instruction, to find each link more explicit and intelligible than the last.

The second chapter of St. Mark will not disappoint these expectations. At the same time, it will be necessary to preface a view of its contents with some cautions, which will be found useful, not only now, but in the whole of our future course of readings.

And first, it must be clearly borne in mind, that instruction is to be sought for, not only in the record of our Saviour's *words*, but in that of his *works*—his more striking actions, and especially his miracles. Some remarks were made

on this subject when we were considering the preceding chapter.

Again, although in the narrative of St. Mark, or of any one Evangelist, a parable or instructive miracle may be recorded, as if conveying the first hint of any truth, which is found unfolded in that Evangelist's narrative; yet it by no means follows, that this parable or miracle was the first occasion of our Lord's inculcating the doctrine in question. Sometimes the *original* and first link in the series may be omitted; and the first named will then contain a reference to some piece of instruction not recorded by that Evangelist. In this respect it is that the use of the four Gospels is apparent. We shall generally find in one what has been so omitted in another. If the view given of our Lord's ministry be correct, that his teaching was progressive and connected throughout, the Evangelists could not have been insensible of the importance of the principle. In their successive narratives therefore, nothing is more likely, than that the first hint, or any closely connecting links in a series of teaching, if omitted by a preceding historian, should be carefully related by a succeeding one, who had

experienced the need of it. If human wisdom were too weak to suggest and perform this, it was surely a case not unworthy of the extraordinary assistance of the Holy Ghost, which was promised not less to the written than to the oral Gospels of Christ's servants. To this cause we may attribute the exactness of St. John's relation of the marriage-feast miracle, and its being specified as "the *beginning* of miracles;" and also his detail of many other matters wholly passed over or slightly mentioned by the other three. On the other hand, what was already familiarly known, either by means of an existing narrative, or otherwise, might, if conciseness were an object, be naturally omitted. Hence, doubtless, many of the omissions of St. Mark and St. John. To revert to an instance just noticed—the marriage-feast miracle at Cana. It was probably so famous as to be neglected by St. Matthew and St. Luke when selecting facts to record for the use of the Church. On the same ground St. Mark too might omit it, but still relate that portion of Christ's teaching which was connected with it, and which was to be illustrated by it. In process of time, as the Church became enlarged,

and more of its information was drawn from *written* documents; as the persons converted were removed further and further from the scene of these occurrences; the necessity of recording such an important event (hitherto unrecorded from its notoriety) would be obvious. The last Evangelist might have viewed the matter in this light, when he wrote the account of the miracle at Cana; the other narratives supposing all along in their readers a knowledge of it —a knowledge which in their case was derived *orally*, as in ours it is from the written record. All this must be borne in mind as we proceed.

THE CURE OF THE PALSIED MAN.

Ver. 1—12.

And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the

sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Our Lord had, according to the preceding narrative, performed various miracles of bodily healing, in themselves no less expressive of a *moral* course of healing than this. But the former were the first obscure hints, awakening the attention. Now he is repeating his miracles; and in this, first shews a little more of their meaning. He now begins to connect release from bodily infirmity, with release from moral infirmity; and directs his hearers to a reconsideration of his former miracles, as at once symbolically expressing the doctrine that he was the physician of men's

souls, and confirming the truth of it, by the proof they afforded of God being with him. Observe, accordingly, that he first tells the man with the palsy, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" and then, when he cures him, expounds, as it were, the hint contained in his miracles of healing, by saying, "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?"

THE CALL OF LEVI, WHO IS THE SAME AS MATTHEW, AND CHRIST'S EATING WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

Ver. 13—17.

And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Here is an instance of our Lord's teaching by reference to what was going on in the presence of his hearers—what was done or said. The Pharisees were expressing their surprise that a grave Teacher should be sitting at a feast with publicans and sinners; and Christ, after reverting to the character of his miracles, observes, that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He meant not, of course, that the world was divided into righteous and sinners, but that all were sinners *before God;* and this truth was so worded, from the appearance of many who were accounted sinners *before men* also. If these Pharisees had carried their presumptuous arrogance further, and had claimed for themselves, as distinguished from others, the character of angels; he might in like manner have said, "I came not to call angels but men." It was, in short, an implied rebuke for their assuming a character which did not exist on earth, save in his own person—for all had gone astray, and there was none righteous, no, not one.

The passage furnishes also, you will observe, a mark of the connection which was kept up throughout the course of Christ's teaching. The

proverb which he quotes, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," connects this lesson with the symbolical instruction afforded by his previous miracles. Our Lord's care to combine lesson with lesson is very remarkable; nor is it improbable that, among other objects, he might have designed thereby to train the minds of his hearers to a habit of thought, which would facilitate their interpretation of the obscure instructions of the Old Testament by the use of that gradual light which the New was throwing on it. God's whole series of revelations was in fact on the same principle as that portion of them comprised in the ministry of his Son. His disciples learnt perhaps the true method of interpreting the Law, by the very act of learning the Gospel as Christ taught it.

CHRIST'S ANSWER TO THE PHARISEES RESPECTING HIS DISCIPLES NOT FASTING.

Ver. 18—22.

And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as

they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Keeping in view the tissue-like character of our Lord's lessons, we shall observe, that he sometimes preserves the connection, not, as in the former instances, by repeating the same truth so as to remind them of its having been previously taught; but by clothing some different doctrine in forms of expression which reminded his hearers of a preceding portion of his ministry. It would seem that, from the very earliest stage of their training, the apostles were thus taught to consider the counsel of God as a connected whole. In the present instance, suppose St. Mark to have written under the impression that the beginning of miracles at Cana was fully and universally known to his readers, so much so as to be omitted in his narrative: he might

still be supposed to preserve the allusions, or apparent allusions to it, contained in the language of our Saviour's reply to the Pharisees; "Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles." That first miracle, as the "beginning of miracles," might be expected to be pregnant with meaning. Still, agreeably to the view taken of the *gradual disclosure* of the meaning of all Christ's lessons, it would at the time contain little self-explanation. Read the narrative of St. John, and such is precisely the impression which it leaves—an impression of surmise, which the circumstances taken alone by no means satisfy. For the *use* of such a lesson, if lesson it were, the great Teacher would surely revert again and again to the images of that scene; would explain portion by portion; first,

darkly, then more clearly; and would finally combine the whole, in the more advanced stages of his ministry, into doctrines clear and explicitly expressed. Here is the beginning of such a process of exposition. The employment of a bridegroom and a nuptial train, as images to designate himself and his disciples, was likely to kindle a train of associations with the marvellous scene at Cana. While the imagination was thus refreshed, our Lord gives a meaning to that scene, which had not yet perhaps been observed, "New wine must be put into new bottles;" intimating that the image on which he was harping, was the same as that which he had symbolically presented to them in the feast. And although the truth conveyed was still dim and indistinct, they might perceive that there was some connection between the symbol of new wine and a new dispensation; and that all was annexed somehow to the "taking away of Him" who described himself as "the Bridegroom."

If it should occur to any, that, in this and in some other cases which may be adverted to in proof or illustration of the connected and tissue-like form of Christ's teaching, the expression was

only a common proverb—it should be observed, that were these the *only* expressions which appear to allude thus to former acts and words, there might be some force in the objection; but observing a long train into which these fit, who can scruple to give them a place amongst the rest? Perhaps even the observation respecting the new cloth and the old garment, may be, like the one which accompanies it, an allusion to some lesson unrecorded; to some portion perhaps of that very scene at Cana.

THE DISCIPLES PLUCKING THE EARS OF CORN ON THE SABBATH.

Ver. 23—28.

And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the

sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Christ here connects a declaration of his being Lord of the sabbath with an event in the Old Testament history, of which the circumstances were somewhat similar. This confirms what was before observed, that, in his method of combining the several parts of his own instruction, he had in view, amongst other objects, that of teaching his disciples to connect his own ministry, as a whole, with the facts of the old dispensation —so as to explain the former by the latter. The passage of Old Testament history will be found in the twenty-first chapter of the first book of Samuel, and will derive further illustration from the twenty-fourth chapter of Leviticus, ver. 9.

The declaration that "the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath," was, or ought to have been, intelligible to those, who knew that the strict command of God was, "Keep *my* sabbaths." This *property* in God's sabbath, was now claimed by Christ, and accordingly they do all so far appear to have understood his meaning, that his enemies watched him closely, (see chap. iii.) in

order to observe whether he would act as he professed. The frequent *tests* by which they tried his observance of the sabbath, and the importance attached to his most trifling violation of it, must be considered with reference to this view.

CHAPTER III.

CURE OF THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND ON THE SABBATH DAY.

Ver. 1—7.

And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea.

In considering the miracle here recorded, it will be useful to call to mind the observation made at the close of the preceding chapter. The concert of the Pharisees with the Herodians

to destroy Jesus, is very intelligible, if we suppose that our Lord's miracle of healing on the sabbath day had confirmed suspicions, already awakened, that he was assuming the character of Lord of the sabbath. They now felt justified in proceeding against him; because he had not only avowed it, but was acting up to the avowal; he was practically shewing, that his words were to be construed in a sense which to their apprehension was blasphemous.

CHRIST'S CHARGE TO THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS, NOT TO MAKE HIM KNOWN.

Ver. 7—12.

But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

The unclean spirits called Jesus the Son of

God. Now it was his object gradually to exercise the faith of his hearers—to prepare them for truth after truth—and he did not therefore wish to have himself avowed to those whose docility and candour had not been so exercised. Even to his disciples his revelation of himself was gradual. It might also have exposed him to the hazard of an attempt to force on him temporal royalty; and that there was some risk of this may be inferred from his removal into a mountain.

APPOINTMENT AND MISSION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

Ver. 13—19.

And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils: and Simon he surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him.

Our Lord appointed the twelve, "that they might be with him;" and so be witnesses of the

alluded to some display of energy or eloquence, which they were to make in the service of the good cause, to which they were now attached.

OUR LORD ACCUSED OF BEING BESIDE HIMSELF, AND OF BEING AN AGENT OF SATAN.

Ver. 19—30.

And they went into an house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Both the friends of Jesus and the scribes were unwilling to suppose that he was one

commissioned by God. The reason was this. The whole nation, with one consent, looked at this time for their Messiah, but made sure of recognizing in him a temporal king. Even the disciples and apostles continued long under this delusion. But the difference between their case and that of those who rejected him was; that although they could not explain to themselves how his lowly condition was consistent with their view of prophecy, yet they were candid enough not to shut their eyes to the evidence arising from miracles.

The scribes, on the contrary, went so far as to impute these miracles to the agency of Satan; which occasioned our Lord to assert, that "he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation;" meaning, that although they may revile him, with some plea, as long as they regarded his actions as merely those of a man; yet, when they perceived his actions to proceed from superhuman agency, and they still reviled; it was God and not man they were blaspheming. Their case was hopeless. Even so when Ananias and Sapphira were smitten

with death, St. Peter's declaration was, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God[b]."

CHRIST'S DISCIPLES, HIS MOTHER, AND HIS BRETHREN.

Ver. 31—35.

There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

This is a very striking instance of a peculiarity in our Lord's teaching, which has been already more than once noticed. Instead of expressing in any metaphors that chanced to occur to him those truths, which, from being new or strange could only be expressed metaphorically, he frequently made present scenes and objects the sources from which he derived his figurative language. This was probably the first lesson in a long series, on a subject which only allowed of

[b] Acts v. 4.

figurative language—the new relationship between God and man through the Holy Spirit. As Jesus was declared to be the Son of God, because of the union of the divine and human nature in him; so he intimates that a union, of a different kind indeed, but still a union between the divine and human nature, was to take place in us. That those who heard his word were to become the sons of God by adoption; "his mother and his brethren." When afterwards in the Gospel narrative, and in the apostolic Epistles, we meet with the phrases, "being born of God," "born again," "born of water and of the Spirit," "putting on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," and the many other kindred expressions, it will be useful, from time to time, to think on this, the apparent origin and fountain of all these phrases; we shall then be reminded that they are metaphors, and be guided in our interpretation of them by remembering also the scene which appears to have first suggested them.

CHAPTER IV.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Ver. 1—9.

And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The imagery of this parable was no doubt derived from a scene which was frequently present to Jesus and his hearers—the fields with their

various culture and produce—the rich land, the stony ground, and the highway—the ripened corn, the blighted stalk, and the trampled blade. These are accordingly images which very frequently recur in his teaching; not only in his parables, but in his other discourses, which of course contained allusions to the imagery of his parables.

By this repetition of the same images and metaphors, under different combinations, in parable after parable and discourse after discourse, there was one very obvious purpose accomplished. His lessons were more easily connected, and each new one more readily and fully understood, from the familiarity which his hearers acquired with the class of metaphors so continually used. In this, as in all other respects, the constant hearer enjoyed an advantage over the casual attendant. And this indeed was agreeable to our Lord's declaration, "to him that hath shall be given." To the same principle must be referred his practice of explaining his parables only to his disciples. It was their privilege to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE.

Ver. 10—20.

And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

It appears to have been our Lord's usual practice to explain his parables only to his dis-

ciples, leaving others in doubt, if not in ignorance, of their full meaning. The want of education in the class of persons addressed, may account for the fact, that instruction plain enough to us, required in their case explanation.

That he should make this distinction between his hearers, was no proof of any unequal dispensation of truth and mercy; but only the reward of docility, and humility, and candour; for any of his hearers might have partaken of the privilege by becoming his disciples. Those who came to him, he in no wise cast out.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE INSTRUCTED.

Ver. 21—25.

And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he saith unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

This declaration follows seasonably the exposition of the parable; because the disciples, on

being favoured with this clearer insight into our Lord's meaning, required to be warned, that it was not simply a mark of favour, but a talent, for which they were responsible. *Their* candle was lighted; but woe to them, if they hid it under a bushel, and imparted not that light to others: it was given to them to know the mysteries or secrets of the kingdom of heaven; but it was done, that through them these secrets should be manifested and go abroad. They heard what kings and prophets had desired to hear; but the impression to be made on their minds by this was, that of responsibility for the employment of the trust. They were to take heed how they heard. Nay, on their use of each privilege depended their enjoyment of fresh privileges; even as on the use of this world depend the enjoyment of the next. "He that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."

IMAGES REPRESENTING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Ver. 26—34.

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he know-

eth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

By the kingdom of God, in this and in most passages of the New Testament, is meant the Church of Christ—the Gospel dispensation. It was called a *kingdom*, because God's former Church, the Jewish, which it has succeeded and superseded, was literally a kingdom. It was distinguished from it by the additional expressions "of heaven," and "of God;" because our divine King governs not his Church, as He did the Jewish, by vicegerents, but is Himself our governor. His residence is in the hearts of the faithful, his laws in the inspired word, which he has given us. It is so distinguished also, be-

cause, agreeably with this change, there is no longer any system of worldly rewards and punishments, but all are future. God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained[a]."

These comparisons of the rise and progress of the Christian society, to the growth of corn and mustard seed, were possibly spoken in connection with the warnings which are placed immediately before them in the narrative, and which have been explained. The hearers were reminded, that the progress would be gentle, and escape observation: and therefore the greater need was there that they should take heed how they heard; lest they should be found behind hand, and unable to follow up the growth of truth. In this spirit St. Paul exclaims, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus[b]."

The comparison of the grain of mustard seed differs from that of the corn in this. The

[a] Acts xviii. 31. [b] Philipp. iii. 13, 14.

image of the corn in its gradual growth suggests the *unobserved* advance of Christianity; the rapid rise and wonderful spread of the mustard plant suggests the contrast between the Gospel in its maturity, and its obscure and humble beginning.

CHRIST CALMING THE SEA.

Ver. 35—41.

And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

One of the characteristics of Christ's miracles noticed in the early part of these readings was, that they sometimes implied a claim to those attributes, which long habit or especial revelation

had made the Jews attach to Jehovah alone. Of this kind was healing the leprosy; and of this kind, perhaps, was the miracle of calming the sea. In the Psalms, the control of the sea is made a frequent and striking image of the exercise of Omnipotence[c], and the Psalms were the poetry, the light reading, of the nation,—that portion of Jewish literature, which his uneducated followers were likely to be best acquainted with. National ballads are familiar even to the rudest peasantry; and the psaltery contained the national melodies of the Israelites.

His apostles too, it should be further remarked, belonged some of them to a profession, which made this miracle particularly striking to them. They were familiar with the storms of the lake on which they pursued their business as fishermen; and as they were the least likely to be deceived as to the reality of such a miracle, so they were the most likely to appreciate and to remember it.

[c] See Psalm lxxvii. 19. xciii. 4.

CHAPTER V.

CURE OF A DEMONIAC, AND THE DEVILS CAST OUT PERMITTED TO GO INTO A HERD OF SWINE.

Ver. 1—20.

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And

all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

CHRIST came to do away with the evil introduced by Satan at the fall. This was of two kinds; natural and moral; disease and sin; death and eternal death. Now the *natural* evil, besides being in itself evil, appears all along to have been regarded as a type and assurance of the moral

evil. Hence the spiritual penalty which corresponds to death, has never even received a different name from the natural penalty.

Christ came then to do away with both kinds of evil; and to shew this, he continually connected his miracles of healing with his forgiveness of sins. His miracles of casting out devils were of the same import, but carried the lesson still further. In these cases, the *immediate* agency of the Devil was recognized; and the cure of them, therefore, was at once a more palpable fulfilment of his work in destroying the *natural* evil introduced by Satan, and also a sign of his power to destroy that *spiritual* evil, which was coexistent with it; which was derived from the same Being, and which was typified and attested by it.

Still in future ages, if not in that age, a doubt might have arisen as to the reality of these possessions. A special miracle, such as this, might have been performed, to prevent this doubt, so destructive as it would be of a clear view of his ministry. The same possession produced the same effects on the human subject, and the brute; and this in a case, which excluded all possibility of doubt. The devils had expostulated through

the organs of speech which belonged to their victim, and had declared themselves. But this was not enough. It might still have been said, that these were the wild expressions of a maniac or enthusiast, fancying himself to be so afflicted. The last stage of the miracle effectually provided against such a notion. The brute was out of the reach of enthusiasm, and the same evil spirits which possessed the man had passed into the swine. To make it more apparent, it was not one animal, but a whole herd.

THE RAISING OF JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER.

Ver. 21—24. 35—43.

And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and

John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

It has been questioned, whether the damsel was really dead; or, whether our Lord's expression meant literally that she was not dead but asleep, i. e. in a swoon or trance. If her recovery was miraculous, and all agree in this, the question whether she were recovered from a trance or from death, ought not to affect the character of the miracle; for to mere human agents the one is as impossible as the other, and therefore the one quite as much proof of superhuman agency as the other. To man there are no gradations of power perceptible in miraculous

agency. But if you consider the impression produced, the raising from the dead would be always likely to operate on men's minds more strongly than the miraculous cure of sickness. There are really no degrees of power which can be measured by us in miracles; no divisions or gradations when once the impossible is passed; but the practical effect is as if there were.

And the effect of this miracle is accordingly one reason which would incline one to take the more common view of it, and to suppose, that the damsel was raised, not from a trance but from death. Another reason, which is stronger, is, that Christ selected, as witnesses of the miracle, the three apostles, who were admitted as select witnesses of two other of the most remarkable passages of his life—his Transfiguration, and his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. There seems a correspondence with this, in their being called on to be present, at what may thus be considered as the first instance of his restoring the dead to life.

But then how are we to understand our Lord's assertion, "The damsel is not dead but sleepeth?" In the same manner, no doubt, as when he said "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go, that I

may awake him out of sleep[z]." He meant to hint by this expression in each case, that it was not a *final* death; but one from which the person should recover, before his present connection with life and this world was interrupted for ever—and, in this respect, therefore resembling sleep. It was a temporary death.

As in the case of many of his other miracles, his tone of voice perhaps and manner might have given a further meaning to this expression. It might have aided in conveying a hint—afterwards followed up so as to be intelligible—that death was always henceforward to be considered in a new light, as more like sleep; as a temporary suspension of the energies of mind and body; and that these signal miracles were wrought to prove, that it was he, Jesus Christ, who was to remove the suspension.

To this at least we can scarcely help attributing the language of the sacred writers who so constantly use "sleep" and "sleeping" as simple, unfigurative expressions for death. Thus St. Matthew[a], in his account of the crucifixion, writes, "that the graves were opened, and many bodies of

[z] John xi. 11. [a] Chap. xxvii. 52.

the saints which *slept* arose." In the Acts of the Apostles[b], St. Paul is described as saying, that "David after he had served his own generation *fell on sleep*, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." The same apostle makes the same use of the phrase frequently in his Epistles, as in this sentence from the first Epistle to the Corinthians[c], "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many *sleep*."

THE HEALING OF THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD.

Ver. 25—34.

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what

[b] Chap. xiii. 36. [c] Chap. xi. 30.

was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

Like many of the miracles of healing, this has its symbolical allusion marked, by the emphatic words, "thy faith hath saved thee." Its characteristic however, as distinguished from the others, consists in its being the one which most clearly denoted the doctrine contained obscurely in the preceding chapter—that Christ was not dealing out his spiritual privileges as arbitrary favours—that he was not selecting at random subjects for his kingdom—but that the ground of his selection was one which depended on men themselves. Hence the striking fact, which was made as public as possible, that the "virtue which went forth from him" followed the manifestation of the woman's faith, as if in accordance to a general law, and not as by an incidental exercise of mercy. He had not by word or sign communicated with the woman—he had not seen her, for she stood behind him—and yet she had shared in the divine influence with those whom he had called, conversed with, and taught. And to mark

the circumstance more pointedly, after the general attention to the fact was sufficiently excited, he observes emphatically, "*Thy faith* hath made thee whole."

This lesson might have been the more requisite, because the object on whom he was proceeding to work a miracle—the damsel who lay dead—was one incapable of an act of faith at the time. This miracle, performed while he was on his way to her, became a preparatory warning against drawing a wrong inference from the circumstance. To strengthen the impression, he expressly requires, that the damsel's friends, who were capable of faith, although at the time she was not, should believe. His words to her father are, "Be not afraid, *only believe*."

CHAPTER VI.

CHRIST NOT ACCEPTABLE IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.

Ver. 1—6.

And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Much of Christ's ordinary life must doubtless have partaken of the character of other men's lives. This, connected with the knowledge of his earthly birth and parentage, seemed quite irreconcileable with the preconceived image of

Christ the Immanuel, which occupied men's minds; and is a warning to us, not to frame theories of propriety respecting the measures of divine wisdom, and to try those measures afterwards by these theories.

Any *record*, accordingly, of those parts of our Saviour's life and conversation which were unconnected with his ministry, would have been likely, from the same natural disposition in mankind, to occasion mischief, *after* his claims to be the Messiah had been unquestionably established. The same bent of mind, would have led us probably to the error of attributing an extraordinary character to these, as well as to the parts of his life which were really entitled to it. Like his countrymen, we should have been unwilling to see any thing in the actions, words, or person of Immanuel, which was not extraordinary—extra-human—a part of his ministry—a portion of his doctrine—a feature of his example. Even without this *record*, such has been the mischief produced by the Church's legends. How much more would this have been the case, had the topics which form the subject of those legends rested on Scripture authority. It is impossible to calculate the ex-

tent of the superstitious practices which might have been founded on a description of his dress, for instance, his hours of rising and going to rest, and the like; if these matters had formed part of the inspired histories. But we may reasonably suppose that it would have been great; judging from the effect produced by the unauthenticated tales, which pretend to furnish information of this sort.

One statement in this passage of St. Mark is at first sight strange, and requires to be noticed. It is said, that Jesus "could there do no mighty work." Now we know abundantly from other parts of Scripture, that "God gave not the Spirit to him by measure[a];" that "in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily[b];" and that "God in Christ[c]" must have been omnipotent. When it is said therefore, that he could do no mighty work, it cannot be meant, that he had not the power to do it, but that it was incompatible with the rule of his ministry—that, granting that rule to be unbroken, it was impossible.

In like manner we say that God *cannot* act unwisely, unjustly, and the like; meaning thereby,

[a] John iii. 34. [b] Coloss. ii. 9. i. 19. [c] 2 Cor. v. 19.

not that His *ability* or *power* is restricted, but that it would be inconsistent with his attributes as revealed to us. So too we say of an upright man, that he is incapable of a vicious or base action. In the present instance, the circumstance which rendered it incompatible with our Lord's character and established course of ministry, and in that sense impossible, for him to perform many miracles, was the want of faith described in the preceding verse. For even the sick were not usually healed without possessing this qualification; and accordingly, he sometimes tells them that it is their faith that has made them whole.

CHRIST'S MISSION OF HIS APOSTLES IN PARTIES OF TWO TOGETHER.

Ver. 7—13.

And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto

you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

The first and most obvious reason for this mission seems to have been, the dispersion of the good-tidings of Christ and his miracles, and the baptism of those who should listen to the report. And yet, it is certain, that so far from requiring his apostles generally to be the heralds and preachers of these his sayings and doings, our Lord was continually checking the free dispersion of them. The natural course of his ministry seems rather to have required his interposition to check the indiscriminate spreading of his fame, than to encourage and command it. All was soon to be "made known," and "proclaimed on the house-tops;" but, as yet, it was, in some measure, a "secret," whispered in the ear, and confined to the closet. To the disciples only, it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the unheeding multitude he spake in parables. Why then this mission of the apostles to preach and to perform miracles?

It was not simply the publication of his own miracles and of the truths which they attested that he was wont to forbid; but the injudicious, irregular, indiscriminate, publication of them. What he laboured to prevent was the casting of the pearls before swine, the scattering of the good seed where there was no soil. Such a mission as this of the apostles, divided into six parties, might have been requisite in order to give all an equal chance of becoming his disciples, and thereby sharing in their privileges. Each party meanwhile may be supposed to have been guided in their ministry, by a rule of discrimination no less strict than that which marked their Master's.

Another very important object, however, presents itself, as connected with this mission of the apostles during his lifetime. It might have been designed to give them a foretaste and experimental proof of his spiritual presence, support, and guidance of them, when after his ascension they should be permanently separated from his presence in the flesh; even as Moses and Aaron, in their mission to Pharaoh, went through a probation, and acquired a practical conviction of

God's miraculous assistance, before they were called on to perform the adventurous task of conducting the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness. No situation is conceivable which would more require a provision of this sort—a confidence founded on actual experience of support and guidance by their unseen Lord—than the situation of the apostles, when called on to begin their ministry, after that he had ceased to be manifested in the flesh. It is true, that the miraculous strengthening of the promised Comforter might (as we suppose) have been made sufficient to supersede the need of all this precaution; but it is equally true, that its assistance does not in the course of their ministry seem to have been designed to supersede natural means; but only to accomplish that for which no natural provision could suffice.

Accordingly, the whole arrangement of the embassy on which the apostles were now sent, shews a bearing upon this point. Every circumstance was so ordered, as to impress them throughout this journey with the sense of miraculous support from their absent Master. They were to take no provision—no clothes—to claim

shelter and hospitality without scrip or purse—to heal the sick, and to cast out devils. When the period approached too for the final separation, for which this had proved and prepared them, he reminds them of all this; in order that the effect intended by it might not be lost on them: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing[d]?"

The cure of the sick seems from this account to have been performed through the ceremony of anointing, and was probably attached to it. It gave rise to the practice of anointing the sick still observed in the Romish Church—a practice which is now superstitious, because the miraculous efficacy attached to it for a time by divine appointment has manifestly been withdrawn.

DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Ver. 14—29.

And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I be-

[d] Luke xxii. 35.

headed: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

In so concise a history as that of each Evangelist, we are led to expect no more account of John the Baptist, than has reference to Christ and the Gospel. Accordingly, the mention of him is occasional, and forming nothing like a connected narrative. He is only introduced to our notice as proclaiming the Lord's approach, baptizing him, and bearing testimony to him.

The more detailed narrative of his birth, and here also of his death, is no exception to the rule which probably guided the sacred penman in selecting their notices of him. They record minutely not only the circumstances of his birth and parentage, but of his death; as if in contrast with the corresponding portions of the life of Christ. In our Lord's case, each of these periods had been especially marked by the finger of prophecy; and it might have been expedient, not only to testify that these prophecies had been fulfilled in Jesus; but also, that they had not been fulfilled in the other great personage who appeared with him, and whose appearance had occasioned in some a surmise that he was the Messiah [b]. Hence, whilst St. Luke, who details

[b] John i. 19.

the circumstances of our Lord's birth and parentage, relates also the birth and parentage of John, St. Mark only records his death; because his Gospel contains the narrative of the crucifixion; but excludes the nativity and parentage of the Saviour.

MIRACLE OF FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND WITH FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES.

Ver. 30—44.

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall

we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

This was one of the many miracles which conveyed not only evidence of divine support and sanction vouchsafed to the performer, but a hint that the performer was God incarnate. These miracles evince such a design, from their being plainly identified with some portion of that agency, which Jehovah was known to have claimed as his peculiar and immediate province —some act which was referred immediately to Him; and not to Him through the ministry of his servants. God had given the Israelites manna—Jesus gives the multitude miraculous food. Jehovah does it in the wilderness—in the

wilderness too Jesus performs the miracle. More; he speaks himself of both alike as symbols of "the bread of life"—the nourishment of the soul in its spiritual growth. To those therefore who had understanding to receive the hint conveyed by this miracle, his claim must have seemed the same, as it did to the Pharisees when they heard him assert, that "the Son of man was Lord of the sabbath."

This miracle had, we know, the effect of producing an attempt to make him a king, and was the cause of his retiring to a mountain. This fact we learn from St. John [d]. But it does not therefore follow, that all looked on our Lord's marvellous act in precisely the light in which the preceding remarks place it. Many might have considered it only as affording proof of his power to support an army miraculously, and be led forthwith to hail him confidently as the Messiah; supposing, as indeed all the Jews did, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince.

[d] Chap. vi. 15.

CHRIST WALKING ON THE SEA.

Ver. 45—52.

And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

Among the characteristics of Jehovah's power, especially in the language of the Psalms, no one is more prominent than His control of the sea. Sacred literature being the only literature of the Jews, and the Psalms being, one might easily conceive, the more popular portion, these passages must have been familiar to all in a humble

walk of life; but most familiar, and most interesting, to men whose employment was on the sea. The apostles, therefore, may be supposed to have seen Christ walking on the sea, with more than the feelings awakened by another miracle. The act was doubtless associated in their minds with many a pious meditation in which they had indulged, while toiling peaceably with their nets, or struggling against the storm. How often must they have called to mind the language of inspiration! "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters." "The Lord is mightier than the mighty waves[e]." How often must their hearts and lips have appealed to Him, as the only Being who could avert their perils, and bless their labours!

The words of Jesus to them, while performing the miracle, would be likely to confirm any such spontaneous suggestions; and were doubtless designed to do so. In the original they are, "Be of good cheer, I AM[f]." Now I AM, you may remember, was the title which Jehovah had given to himself when he sent Moses to the Israelites. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I

[e] Psalm lxxvii. 19. and xciii. 4. [f] Θαρσεῖτε, ἐγώ εἰμι.

come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you[g]." Accordingly, when Jesus made use of the same expression to the Scribes and Pharisees, and told them, "Before Abraham was, I AM," they considered it blasphemy, and would have stoned him forthwith, had he not hid himself[h].

CHRIST'S POPULARITY.

Ver. 53—56.

And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

From the eagerness here displayed to receive the benefit of Christ's miraculous agency, it appears

[g] Exodus iii. 13, 14. [h] John viii. 58, 59.

that the effect of the miracle of the loaves and fishes could not have immediately subsided. It is probable, that in this, as in many other instances, persons were convinced by miracles, who afterwards fell off from the faith. "Many of his disciples," on one occasion, "went back, and walked no more with him[i];" and this was doubtless the fate of great numbers. "Ye are they," said our Lord to his apostles towards the close of his ministry, "Ye are they who have *continued* with me in my temptations[k]." Where belief was felt and professed, the danger and trial were not past. It was requisite that our Lord should pray for Peter, who had been foremost in confessing him to be the Christ, that his faith might not fail him. The Devil, then, as now, was ready to pluck the word out of the heart of the unimproving believer—to make the last state of many worse than the first.

[i] John vi. 66. [k] Luke xxii. 28.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PHARISAICAL ABUSE OF THE LAW.

Ver. 1—23.

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S mission appears, from the terms of Malachi's prophecy[a], to have had in

[a] Chap. iv. 4, 5, 6.

view mainly, the correction of the false views which were taken of the Mosaic dispensation. He was the restorer of the Law to its natural and true character and interpretation; the great doctors and guides of the nation having perverted it by means of their unauthenticated traditions. Through this method of expounding Scripture they had made the word of God of none effect; first, by considering the forms and ceremonies of the Jewish dispensation as an ultimate end, and effectual in themselves, without reference to the morality and true inward religion which they were designed to aid, and keep up: secondly, by obscuring and destroying the prophetic picture exhibited in them, whereby our Lord was to be recognized when he came as their promised Messiah. Hence their obstinate blindness to his miracles, and their persevering expectation of a *temporal* ruler and deliverer.

The origin of these traditions is uncertain. They appear to have been the gradual accumulation of commentaries originally, perhaps, useful and judicious, but in time mixed with bolder and more independent speculations, as the temptation to introduce them became greater, from the in-

creased authority of traditional law. They bear a very close analogy to the traditions of the Romish Church.

Many allusions are found in the Evangelists to the observance of this traditional religion, which constituted the Pharisaical claim to superior righteousness. Of those contained in the passage now read, the only one which requires explanation is the evasion of the duty of supporting a parent; by saying, that the means which you would otherwise employ for that purpose were *corban*, or a gift to God. It appears to have been a practice with those who were unwilling to support their parents, to dedicate their property—to make a sort of reversion of it—to the service of God; which, by the sanction of the traditional comments on their Law, left them free to use it whilst in their own hands.

Concerning the effect of the outward piety which tradition allowed to be substituted for inward holiness, it deserves to be noticed, that tradition was thereby not only a cause why the Messiah was not recognized; but presented a strong obstacle to the reception of the evangelical tenets. Of Christ's preaching, the very founda-

tion doctrine was that of the *atonement*. Now to men, who, like the Pharisees, were accustomed, by laborious and exact external observances, to be in their own eyes, in the eyes of others, and, as they thought, in the sight of God, laying up in store enough, and more than enough, merit, and advancing day by day from superior to supreme holiness, nothing could be more mortifying and unacceptable than the doctrine of the atonement. To be told that all, even the best, required the sacrifice of the Son of God for the remission of sins; that their pardon was a gift, not a right; that, as sinners, not as righteous men, they were invited into the kingdom of their Messiah; was a view of that glorious period and personage from which they at once averted their eyes. Heavier burthens than those which they already submitted to they would have borne; but to be told that these burthens were worse than useless, was intolerable.

CURE OF THE SYROPHŒNICIAN WOMAN.

Ver. 24—30.

And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. For a certain

woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

The peculiar character of this miracle arises from the object of the Saviour's mercy being not only a Gentile, but one of the impious and impure race of Canaan[b]. The delay which Christ makes before performing it, as well as his declarations and hints, all doubtless were intended to direct the attention of the by-standers to this circumstance, and thereby to convey to them his first notice of the conversion of the Gentiles.

Two points about the probable origin and nature of this woman's faith deserve to be noticed.

The first is contained in the terms of her address

[b] See Bp. Horsley's Sermons, serm. xxxvii. and xxxviii.

to Jesus, which are omitted by St. Mark, but will be found in St. Matthew's narrative of the transaction[b]. Her words were, "Have mercy on me, Lord, thou Son of David." Now this denotes that the woman was acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures—probably was a proselyte of the gate, or devout Gentile: and that, from these Scriptures, she, by candid and patient inquiry, had elicited a truth, which was long a secret to the apostles themselves. The passage of Scripture, to which she evidently alludes in her address, is that same with which the Lord afterwards confounded the Pharisees and scribes; "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool[c];" and if the use of these words was the evidence of the woman's faith, which recommended her to the Lord, they must have been so used, as to indicate that she had understood their true import.

The faith however which was most extraordinary in her case, and which was directed to an object still longer hid from the apostles themselves, was, that the Gentiles were to be saved by David's Lord and Son. How had she learnt this? It

[b] Chap. xv. 22. [c] Luke xx. 42, 43.

cannot be thought improbable, that she might have been among those who had witnessed the miracle of the loaves and fishes recorded in the preceding chapter. If so, this might have rendered her insight into the true explanation of prophecy, even in opposition to the glosses of the Jewish doctors, more easy. Our Saviour's words do indeed seem to convey a hint of this. In that miracle, it is to be observed, he not only supplied bread for the multitude, but caused the "crumbs that fell," the remains, to amount to far more than the original little stock of provision out of which the whole had miraculously grown. What appears to have been primarily intended by the miracle has been already shewn. It was one of many, which indicate the character of God manifest in the flesh. It was intended to convey that impression, and to a candid mind it would convey it. What if it did convey it to the humble unprejudiced mind of this woman? What if it caused her, to return to her home intent on searching the Scriptures, and from that search afterwards to address Jesus as David's Lord and Son? Even supposing that she had not discovered from those Scriptures that the call of the Gentiles

was predestined from the foundation of the world, she would now have ascertained from the combined evidence of Scripture and miracle, that it was a manifestation of Jehovah to whom she was applying—the all-merciful, and the all-powerful.

All this is by no means improbable; and if true, our Saviour's trial of her faith was put in terms peculiarly appropriate. His words to her hint at the miraculous scene of the loaves multiplied and the many fed, in a way which would naturally make her remember the "seven baskets of the fragments which were over and above," and give a meaning to the circumstance even beyond that perhaps which it was originally designed to convey. Besides the bread of life and mercy which supplied all who were the immediate objects of the miracle, there was in reserve an abundance more. There were twelve baskets full of the *fragments*. Her deep interest in the question might have roused her mind to its utmost acuteness—and it is astonishing how much piety, like every strong feeling, sharpens the intellect—and when told that Christ's bread was intended for the children only, with a ready conviction

and earnest hope, she might have alluded to those fragments which were carefully gathered up—not to be lost—not to be thrown away—but designed for some to eat, the original objects of his bounty having had enough. Her train of thought seems to run thus, " Lord, thou needest not cast the *children's bread* to the dogs, they have enough provided; but there is still some left, and the dogs may eat the *crumbs that fall* from the master's table."

This view receives confirmation from the narrative contained in chapter viii. 14—21. At all events no one can reasonably doubt, that the reward of the woman's faith applied to her belief in Christ's power to shew mercy to the Gentiles also.

CURE OF HIM WHO WAS DEAF, AND HAD AN IMPEDIMENT IN HIS SPEECH.

Ver. 31—37.

And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to

heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

The expression this miracle called forth, "he doeth all things well," must be interpreted of our Lord's duly fulfilling the prophetic marks of the Messiah. Of these, none could have been more known than those given by Isaiah concerning the cure of the deaf, and dumb, and lame[d]; and as he did not wish to reveal himself to the multitude, he accordingly performed this miracle apart, and forbad its being published. It will be observed, that both instances of his feeding the multitude miraculously are followed up by cases of blindness cured. The probable object of this will be more apparent in the next, and therefore more explicit, miraculous act.

[d] Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIRACLE OF FEEDING FOUR THOUSAND WITH SEVEN LOAVES AND A FEW SMALL FISHES.

Ver. 1—21.

In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away. And straightway he entered into a ship with his dis-

ciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

For the instruction of his disciples, as well as for the relief of the multitude, Christ, we see, a second time performs the miracle of feeding numbers with a few loaves and fishes in a desert place; and follows it up, according to his usual mode of instruction, with a hint to them, to

avoid the prejudiced view of God's dealings and promises exhibited in the conduct of the Pharisees. The connection between the caution and the miracle, is marked by the terms of the caution being derived from the circumstances of the miracle; "Beware of *the leaven* of the Pharisees." Now no feature of this Pharisaical "leaven" was more apparent, throughout the early progress of Christianity, than their prejudice against the admission of the Gentiles to a full participation of the privileges of God's elect. Their view of the prophecies concerning the call of the Gentiles was thoroughly darkened. The particular prejudice indeed which they, on this occasion, betrayed, was that of being content with no sign, but the sign, which they literally interpreted from Daniel, to be the appearance of the Messiah in the sky. But this was only one instance of a general principle of erroneous interpretation and intellectual blindness; against the chief feature of which the symbolical language of the miracle was directed. Having then twice performed a miracle with the same import—the fragments of the loaves and fishes having been twice, by express order, gathered up, to an

amount incalculably greater than was the original stock of provision—the Syrophœnician Gentile having seen through the meaning of it all, and her faith having been publicly noticed, commended, and rewarded; well might the Lord express his marvel at the dulness of his apostles, when he advanced one step beyond the miracle, and connected it with a hint about the conduct of the Pharisees, without being yet understood. "Perceive ye not yet, neither understand?" exclaims he; "have ye your heart yet hardened? having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not *remember?*" He then calls to their mind the former miracle, which was supposed to have excited the belief of the Syrophœnician woman, as well as this which he had so lately performed; and the only question about each is, "How many *baskets full of fragments* took ye up?" They answered by a simple statement of the number of baskets, without evincing that they had gathered any thing from the fact; and caused our Saviour to close the conversation, with the same remark of mingled surprise and censure with which he commenced it, "How is it that ye do not understand?" Understand they did not

until St. Peter's vision; nor was the Church fully reconciled to the new doctrine, until long after St. Paul's ministry had commenced.

CURE OF THE BLIND MAN.

Ver. 22—26.

And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

This miraculous cure of a blind man has an evident allusion to the dulness of our Lord's disciples, which was noticed in the last section. In reference to this he had asked them, Having eyes see ye not? and having ears hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Twelve. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand? The very *slow* and *gradual*

way too in which his miracle of healing the bodily infirmity of the blind man was performed, itself indicates this intended analogy. At first, the blind man looks up, and sees men as trees walking; and it is only in a further stage of the miracle that he sees plainly. Now with miracles performed on the blind and deaf, the apostles had by this time become familiar. The secondary application too of these miracles—the hints they conveyed of what our Lord was doing for the minds and hearts of men—they must by this time have well understood. But in the present instance, the application of the miracle to their case more especially was intimated by the terms of the reproof which he had just before given them. "Having eyes do ye not see?" They were therefore, one would think, led forcibly to attach a meaning to a feature in this miracle, which distinguished it from other similar cases of sight restored; and to suspect, that the peculiarity was intended to point at them, and at that dulness which had lately called forth such strong expressions from our Lord. Nothing perhaps more required to be impressed on their minds, than that while Jesus was commending and rewarding their

faith, by clearer and clearer revelation; they were still to be on the alert about discovering *the whole truth*—that their faith, until they should arrive at the perfect man, was even like the slow-coming vision of this blind man restored to sight, and the objects of it like the men which he saw as trees walking.

ST. PETER'S CONFESSION THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST.

Ver. 27—38.

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

From this passage we find, that the cure of the blind man was followed up by questions from our Lord to his apostles respecting their faith in him, and a freer communication of light to them, "He spake that saying openly." The truth of the lesson conveyed by the miracle is here fully exemplified in St. Peter's behaviour, even with all the striking admonitions and reproofs yet sounding in his ears. "Whom say ye that I am?" asked Christ. Was he John the Baptist? as some supposed. Elias? as others thought. One of the prophets? according to a third surmise. No; "Thou art the Christ," exclaimed St. Peter. *His eyes* were opened, and he saw—but what? Only, as it were, the blind man's first imperfect vision—the objects of faith confused and indistinct. He discovered thus much, that his Master

was the Christ; but when the discourse turned on other features of the scheme of redemption, no less essential in the prophetic picture—when Christ talked of the Son of man suffering—being rejected by the chief priests and elders—put to death—and rising on the third day—he could see nothing of all this. His mind, like the eyes of the blind man gradually acquiring sight, embraced a view of the Messiah, which was only partial, and in shadowy outline. He interrupted our Lord, and forbad him to proceed; and drew on himself the harsh rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

It would seem from all this, that, although faith was made a requisite preparatory to all the blessings of the new dispensation, yet this faith has by no means always had the same object. And how could it? To him that had, to him was to be given. Faith, *according to the light afforded*, was requisite at baptism; but the baptized afterwards had their eyes continually opened to fresh truths; every new one, a reward of the faith exercised on the preceding object which had been presented to it. Is it not so even

now? Who shall say, *under his particular circumstances*, what faith will be necessary for *his* salvation? That which enabled the leper to receive a cure of his visitation was faith, faith in our Saviour; but if he paused there, a worse thing was likely to come upon him. St. Peter's acknowledgment of our Lord that he was the Christ was faith, and faith in Christ; but what was then commended in the apostle, would have been too slender a stock for his salvation, had he, under his after circumstances, never advanced beyond it. Judas must have had faith in Christ; else he would not have followed him so constantly; but his faith did not enlarge and keep pace with his circumstances; and he, we know, perished. That view again, which was great and glorious for John the Baptist, was blindness, and like the imperfect sight of him who saw men as trees walking, in one of the least in the kingdom of heaven. Let every one therefore examine himself not only to ascertain whether he is in the faith, but whether that faith embraces as much religious knowledge as may be expected of *him*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROMISE OR PREDICTION THAT SOME THEN PRESENT SHOULD LIVE TO SEE CHRIST'S KINGDOM ESTABLISHED.

Ver. 1.

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

No part of Christ's prophetic language has more perplexed Christians than the expressions concerning his speedy coming. Even in the inspired age, as we find from St. Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians [a], the apostles themselves, by adopting the same language, raised expectations in some, which it was requisite afterwards to correct and qualify. In later times, the obvious defect of a fulfilment of these promises, in the sense which might otherwise be attached to them, has led to a twofold interpre-

[a] Chap. ii.

tation of these expressions; and has obliged us to solve the difficulty, by supposing that, in the less obvious meaning of these words, Christ has come, and his kingdom has been established; whilst, in a more literal and a more perfect sense, he is yet to come and to reign.

Accordingly, in the present prediction, commentators generally agree, that the coming of God's kingdom in power alluded to the destruction of Jerusalem; and identify with this the promise recorded elsewhere as made to St. John especially, that he should "tarry until his Lord should come[b]." The fact that St. John survived that great event, and that the event itself has appeared worthy of being denoted by the expression of "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," are very plausibly alleged in support of this view.

And yet, with respect to the application of the "sign of the Son of man in heaven," to the destruction of the holy city, it may be questioned whether we are altogether warranted in so readily adopting it. Our Lord, in his use of the words,

[b] John xxi. 22, 23.

certainly *has reference* to the event; but it is more accordant with the truth, and at least equally so with his language, to suppose that the destruction of Jerusalem was not the *object* of his coming, but the *sign* that he had come; inasmuch as it involved the abolition of the temple service, and thereby supposed the establishment of a new dispensation.

Now as the former dispensation was a theocracy, this latter is naturally described under the same image. Indeed it was actually, we know, expected, that there should be a revival of that same extraordinary Providence which marked God's former government; and which naturally belonged to it, although the Jews had for some time provoked God to withdraw it; or else, God had seen good to discontinue it for certain wise ends. Such an expectation, for example, appears in the question once put to our Saviour by his own apostles, "Lord, wilt thou at this time *restore the kingdom* to Israel[c]?" and it was in this way, no doubt, that even the more enlightened reconciled the two conflicting truths, that the

[c] Acts i. 6.

Messiah was to be "Immanuel," and yet a temporal governor.

This view then of the Messiah's character and kingdom being, not indeed correct, but only in part incorrect, our Lord does not wholly discourage the language which was so held respecting him; but only qualifies it with such hints as might serve to clear up what was erroneous in it. When asked, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" he replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." He speaks himself of his kingdom soon coming, and of his being a king; but this he does so as to indicate, that the future theocracy in the true Israel—the new kingdom of God—was to be materially different from the former. True, it was to be restored—God's kingdom was to come again; and his disciples were taught to pray for it in those words of the prayer which he gave them, "thy kingdom come;" and in this passage of St. Mark we are told, that certain persons then alive and with him, were taught to expect that they should witness the event before their death. But then, all this was designed to be qualified with

the remarks which he elsewhere makes, that "his kingdom was not of this world;" whereas the former theocracy was;—that the new "kingdom of God came not by observation," whereas the former came with the lightnings of Mount Sinai, and was throughout addressed palpably to the senses; men walking under it by sight, and not by faith. He tells his hearers again, that this kingdom was *within them;* that is, not, as before, consisting in rule and government administered from external sources and through the mediation of others, but by the indwelling of the Spirit, within its new temple. It was from that shrine that the new Paraclete was to answer when called on—it was in that kingdom the new guide and governor was to reign.

This is really what seems to be meant by "Christ's coming." The full establishment of his Holy Spirit's dispensation was the coming of his kingdom. Let us only compare with these expressions, the language which he holds when confessedly speaking of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and it will be evident that this was meant. "I will not leave you comfortless, *I will come unto you.*" "If a man love me, he will

keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will *come unto him*, and make our abode with him[d]." So too St. John, in hailing the final establishment of that kingdom into which it had been granted him to see his Lord so come, exclaims, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus[e]."

Nor is there any sufficient reason why we should affix a different interpretation to the expression, when it occurs elsewhere in the Gospel histories. For, if it be sometimes used in reference to the condition of the Church in a future state, when the theocracy shall be no longer "*without observation*," but the Christian shall see his Lord and God "face to face," as it were—still, as far as this state is one of a divine government, it may be considered as really only a continuing of the Church's present state. The difference consists, perhaps, not in any new relation in which we shall be placed, but in a clearer perception of our present relations; and through this, and the increasing strength of God's grace, a perfect security may be furnished against violating the duties which flow from those relations.

[d] John xiv. 18, 23. [e] Revelations xxii. 20.

From the passage of St. Mark now read, it appears, that, of our Lord's hearers, there were others besides St. John, who were permitted to see the new kingdom of God—the latter theocracy—the dispensation, in short, under which the Christian Church still is—a kingdom in which our divine Ruler's influence and government is insensible, spiritual, within us, and only known by its results.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

Ver. 2—8. 11—13.

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.——And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily

cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

By connecting the narrative of this mysterious event with the passages immediately preceding, some probable view may be given of its object, considered as a part of the Saviour's ministry.

In verses 27—29 we read of the disciples reporting to Christ the various conjectures abroad respecting him—that he was John Baptist raised from the dead—Elias—one of the prophets. Now of these floating rumours, there were two which had their foundation in Scripture. Before the coming of the Messiah, Elias was, according to Malachi's prediction, destined to visit Israel, and to restore all things[f]. Again, the coming of the Messiah himself, was shadowed forth under a still darker type of the raising up of one like unto Moses[g]; and this is alluded to in the expression "that prophet," or "*the* prophet."

It is not impossible indeed that, joining the prophecy with the recorded fact of Moses, like

[f] Chap. iv. 5, 6. [g] Deut. xviii. 15.

Elias, having no earthly remains to be traced[h], the Jews might have supposed Moses like Elias to have been taken up into heaven, and, like him, designed to be restored to them on the restoration of their theocracy. Against this vague view of the prophet's language then, the glorious scene of the Transfiguration might have been directed. St. Peter had evinced faith enough when the apostles were asked, "And whom say ye that I am?" to reply, "the Christ;" but it by no means followed that this confusion of thought was removed even from his mind. To improve then, as well as to reward, his incipient faith, and the faith of the other apostles, Elias and Moses were miraculously exhibited to their view. This must have convinced them, that Elias did not *really* come in the person of John the Baptist, any more than that Jesus was only Moses revived; and hence the question that followed the spectacle, "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" Hence, too, as Christ could now apply the prophecy to John without danger of misapprehension, he tells them, that in his coming the prophecy was fulfilled.

[h] Deut. xxxiv. 6.

But the more important object of the vision seems to have been, not that which warned the apostles against identifying John with Elias, or Jesus with Moses; but that which confirmed St. Peter's assertion that Jesus was the Christ. A change came over the Lord, "he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." This mysterious brightness was of course the shechinah—the glory—the well-understood emblem of divine manifestation. On two favoured servants of God this mark of His presence was known to have rested, and on two only—on Moses after he came down from Mount Sinai, and his face so shone that he wore a vail[h]; on Elias, or Elijah, when he was borne away from mortal sight, seated on a cloud so irradiated. By these very marks, no doubt, the disciples recognized Moses and Elias, whom they had never seen, but with whom, so characterized, their Scriptures made them acquainted. They now saw them "in glory"—to these servants of God, even as to Jesus, the shechinah was attached. Were they

[h] Exodus xxxiv. 33.

then Immanuels too? Were they (their hearts might have suggested) to be considered as Beings of the same order as their Master? The suggestion was natural, and seems to have been anticipated, by the voice that told them, "This is *my beloved Son*, hear him." Twice to our Lord this glory had been attached, and on each occasion that same voice accompanied it, to guard against the possibility of supposing, that in his case it denoted no more than in the case of Elias or Moses. This was the great object of the Transfiguration. It declared Jesus to be, not like Elias, or like Moses, an inspired man—but the Immanuel—the Christ—him anointed with the Holy Ghost—the Son of God[i]. And

[i] This expression must be interpreted by reference to a common Hebrew idiom, the application of which was very wide, and extended alike to inanimate and animate objects. Thus, Isaiah xxi. 10. "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor," is in the original, "the *son* of my floor." On this principle we meet with "the son of perdition," "the son of peace," "the sons of disobedience," and the like. The analogous expression of the Son of God can only in fairness be interpreted in like manner to mean a divine man—an Immanuel.

hence its place in the sacred narrative is immediately after the Lord's conversation with the apostles about the rumours afloat concerning him, and St. Peter's confession that he was the Christ. Hence too it is followed up by the same injunction as that confession, that they should not make it known publicly. Hence too it seems to have led, as in the former case, to hints of his death and resurrection.

That the apostles, however, should at first have considered it as the opening scene of God's new kingdom, and have therefore suggested the erection of the three tabernacles, is natural when we look back to the discourse of our Lord which had but just before taken place respecting his "coming in the glory of his Father," and his promise that some present should witness it during their natural lives.

SCRUPLE OF THE APOSTLES RESPECTING THE PREDICTED BETRAYAL, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

Ver. 9, 10. 30—32.

And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept

that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.——And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

This scruple of the apostles, respecting the predicted betrayal, death, and resurrection of Christ, is easily understood, when we remember that, even after our Lord's death, they continued to harp on the prophecies respecting his kingdom, as if that kingdom were to be a temporal one. In what way they were probably led to reconcile this with the admitted marks of a divine nature manifested in the person of their Master, has been already suggested, and may perhaps be a satisfactory solution of that which otherwise seems an unaccountable blindness and dulness on their part [k].

[k] See page 113.

MIRACULOUS CURE OF A CHILD POSSESSED BY A DUMB SPIRIT.

Ver. 14—29.

And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into

him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he saith unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Other similar miracles are recorded of our Saviour, and have been already sufficiently the subject of remark, to omit all that applies to this in common with them: as, for instance, that it may be classed among those which were typical of a moral cure of the heart, when labouring under a dumbness and a deafness, worse than the bodily infirmity inflicted by Satan; or again, that it was performed in a way to denote the real agency of the Devil, and to prove that Christ, by expelling him from his dominion over men's bodies, was both willing and able to save to the uttermost, even from his dominion over the soul, those who came unto him.

What I should select as the *peculiar* and *characteristic* feature in this, is contained in the assertion, "this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." These words seem

to convey a hint of the essential difference between our Lord and his apostles and followers, even when both were performing similar miracles. And indeed, as the multitudes soon saw his followers performing the same mighty works as himself, both during his lifetime, and after his death, and (if the promise he made was fulfilled) even greater than these; some such caution might have been continually requisite, and might have been given from time to time, although not left on record. In the present instance, the failure of the apostles in an attempt to do that, which they might have effected had they used the prescribed form of prayer and fasting, shewed that the gift of the Spirit was in their case circumscribed, and its efficacy made to depend on their observance of these requisite conditions. Our Lord forthwith, *without prayer, without fasting, without these preparatory steps which he declared to be requisite,* performs the miracle. What was the natural inference? That "God gave not the Spirit to him (as to others) by measure[1]," and subject to limitations. Their miraculous power was given conditionally. "What things soever ye desire, when

[1] John iii. 34.

ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them[m]." *He* had only to say the word, and the sick man was healed, the devils were cast out, and the dead were raised.

THE TWELVE CORRECTED IN THEIR DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION WHO WAS TO BE FIRST AMONG THEM.

Ver. 33—37.

And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

This discussion of the question, who was to be first amongst the apostles, obviously arose out of our Lord's preceding declarations respecting the speedy establishment of his kingdom, rendered still more vivid, and impressive, by the Transfiguration, which three of them had witnessed. Al-

[m] See chap. xi. 24.

though assured that that glorious scene was not the commencement of his promised reign, they continued doubtless to connect it with the approach of it. It is worthy of remark, that our Lord did not wait for any expression to fall from them on this occasion, which might give him a clue for correcting their erroneous expectations; but, contrary to his usual method, himself extorts from them the working of their minds, and by a beautiful and expressive symbol, and one which long formed a favourite image in his language, checked their ambitious notions. In St. John's writings, the same image most frequently occurs. St. John was one of the three who had witnessed the Transfiguration, and doubtless partook in the general feeling, as strongly as any; and it is not unlikely, that this delicate reproof might have so worked on his sensible heart, as to give the foundation for his peculiar fondness for the metaphorical use of the phrase, "little children."

THE CASE OF ONE NOT CHRIST'S DISCIPLE WHO CAST OUT DEVILS IN HIS NAME.

Ver. 38—50.

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and

we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

This incident ought perhaps to be considered in connection with the failure of the apostles to cast out a devil, which is recorded in the former part of the chapter, and as a renewal of the same

lesson. It is not unlikely that the stranger had tried the effect of observing such preparatory requisites as our Lord had declared necessary; and that his trial had been permitted to succeed, partly for evidence to improve his own faith; but still more, with a view of renewing in the minds of the apostles the impression made by their failure. It would naturally present itself to their minds in a reflection of this form. "We who are his commissioned and chosen followers, by neglecting the appointed means, fasting and prayer, failed to perform the miracle of casting out a devil; and here is one, who is not yet in the train of our Master's followers, and nevertheless by duly performing the ceremony in his name, he has succeeded. Let us and others then beware of supposing our Lord's power and ours alike. His is independent, and his own; ours derived from him, and subject to his arbitrary appointment."

Beyond this, which may be regarded as the primary intent, for which our Lord permitted the stranger to perform the miracle of casting out devils in his name, it served incidentally as an occasion for repeating another lesson which he

had also lately given them. Ever since the Transfiguration, and his plain statement respecting the near approach of his kingdom, the apostles had displayed feelings of ambition, and were congratulating themselves on the place they held as the chosen attendants of the future monarch, and even disputing amongst themselves about priority. It was this feeling which seems to have stimulated the complaint against the stranger, who, at this critical moment, was presuming to assume a part like theirs; and it was against this feeling that our Lord directed the remarks which conclude this chapter. They convey a solemn warning to his apostles, against throwing any impediments in the way of those who were likely to join them, as candidates for his favour, and partakers of his free grace. By way of reminding them of former lessons, in which he had taught them what manner of spirit they were of, he connects his present admonition with that which he before gave them, when they, as now, disputed amongst themselves for priority. For this purpose it is, that he introduces into his language the image of a child—the symbol which he had on that occasion adopted. At that time

he had set a child in the midst of them; he now recalls the lesson to their minds, and connects it with the present by the metaphor he uses, "Whosoever shall offend one of these *little ones* that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." The various strong figures, by which he goes on exhorting them to sacrifice the dearest and most cherished prejudices, rather than fail in this respect, may perhaps have been in like manner connected with some expressive action or word which is not recorded. Their meaning however, and its connection with the reproof, is plain—they were the *salt* of the earth; their rewards were to be proportioned to their alacrity in spreading that society which they seemed desirous to circumscribe —in removing, not in creating, scruples.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUESTION OF THE PHARISEES RESPECTING DIVORCE.

Ver. 1—12.

And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judæa by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again. And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

As it is expressly stated, that the object which the Pharisees had in view, when they put the question to our Lord respecting divorce, was to "tempt" him—that is, to ensnare him into some reply which might form a ground of accusation —they were probably already aware of the doctrine which he held concerning divorce. Moses had permitted divorce, at the pleasure of the husband, except in a case of marriage to which the husband had been compelled by law, on the ground of previous seduction[a]. In objecting therefore to the morality of the permission to divorce, Christ would afford, it was thought, a handle for being charged with contradicting the law of Moses. From this snare, we may observe, he escapes, by asserting the immorality of the practice, *not* on his own authority, (as he would have done to believers,) but on the authority of those very Scriptures, which Moses had written, and sanctioned by his miracles. He appeals to the original form of marriage pronounced by God himself on the first pair; and reminds them, that

[a] The right of the wife to divorce the husband was not part of the Mosaic law; but was a practice introduced only in the age of Christ.

this being the original appointment of God, it could only have been owing to their hardness of heart—their stubborn natures—their monstrous prejudices—that Moses was compelled to relax the law; whilst he left at the same time this record, to serve as a registered protest against the measure.

It is somewhat singular, that so important a qualification of Christ's rule, as the exception in case of fornication, (or conjugal infidelity,) should be recorded, neither in this account of St. Mark, nor in St. Luke's, but only in St. Matthew's Gospel. As it is found in St. Matthew's Gospel, we are quite sure that it proceeded from Christ; and to us therefore the case remains practically the same, as if all the Evangelists had recorded it. But then, did those for whom St. Mark and St. Luke wrote require this qualifying clause less than those for whom St. Matthew wrote? Did they require that for a time it should not be laid before them? It would be difficult to conjecture. Perhaps the Gentile churches of Rome and Asia Minor, who first received the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, required, from the prevailing loose notions among Gentiles concern-

ing conjugal fidelity, that the precept should be given as yet without limitation, and in its simplest and strongest form. The churches of Judæa on the other hand, which are supposed to have been the first that used St. Matthew's Gospel, were already enough enlightened on the subject, to receive both the rule and the precept.

LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST.

Ver. 13—16.

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

This is, perhaps, the most striking of the many various and repeated lessons, which our Saviour delivered on the requisite preparation for understanding and believing his Gospel. We know that he taught in parables and obscure hints to the Pharisees and the multitude, and enjoined

silence on his disciples respecting his plainer instructions; and the reason was, that the Pharisees and the people at large had not this requisite preparation. In what it consisted, the image of a child may suggest, even without the confirmation and illustration furnished by other parts of his teaching. It was humility, trust, and affection; in Scriptural language, fear of God, faith in God, love to God.

The analogy between Christians and children, in these respects, must be carefully distinguished from that by which Christians are said "to be born again," "regenerate," and the like, in reference to a new nature being infused into them by the Holy Spirit. The admitting man to partake of God's Spirit is similar to a new formation of man. He becomes "a new creature." The source of the metaphor is indeed the same, as in the former case; but, in the doctrine of regeneration, we are taught to look to the image of childhood, with reference to the Creator forming a new Being,—endowing a new creature with sensation and thought and feelings; whereas, in the lesson respecting the preparation of heart for the Gospel, we are to regard the character and

habits of childhood, not the new creation of a human Being. Out of the former view are derived the phrases " brethren," " beloved in the Lord," and the like; out of the latter the expression, " little children," as applied to Christians by Jesus, and by his apostle St. John. On St. John's mind the image seems to have made an unusually deep impression. In both senses he continually employs the metaphor. Was he the apostle who forbad these children? and did his heart therefore receive the lesson with greater warmth, and allow it to sink deeper?

The favour shewn by Christ to these infants is often made an argument for infant baptism. In so applying it, however, we should carefully consider the value of the argument. It proves directly no more than that Christ considered infants *capable of benefit* from his blessing; and this, although of itself no proof, forms a very important feature in the presumptive body of proof to be gathered from the New Testament. At the same time, the fact, that the disciples thought them improper objects of the Saviour's notice, indicates that, up to that period, no infants could have been baptized.

This is the more deserving of notice, because not far back in the narrative, we read of our Lord's setting a child before them, and making it a symbol of instruction. Does it not seem strange then, that, after witnessing our Lord's notice of infants so lately, the disciples should have supposed it improper that these should be brought to him? The inference is plain. They could only have considered his former notice as bestowed for the purpose of *conveying instruction to them.* That notice shewed indeed that children in themselves were not objects of dislike to the Saviour; but here were children brought to be *touched. That virtue should go out of him* for infants, was the scruple, and the only scruple; and this does seem to be designedly and formally removed by our Lord's touching them. So considered, the use of his words on this occasion in our baptismal service, is very appropriate; and, as far as it goes, a very striking proof is furnished by them, that infants are fit subjects of admission to the blessings of the Christian covenant.

THE YOUNG MAN WHOSE RICHES WERE AN OBSTACLE TO HIS BECOMING A DISCIPLE.

Ver. 17—31.

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God

all things are possible. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

This is a very striking incident. The young man evidently came to Christ with incipient faith; and, from the nature of his application, must have assured himself that the teacher was "a prophet sent from God;" although he had not recognized in him the Christ, much less penetrated into the character of his kingdom. How does the Lord behave to such an one? Precisely in the same manner as he did to his disciples, and to all who displayed any the least symptoms of faith which might be ripened and improved; and it is this view of the incident which is perhaps the most important and interesting.

If we call to mind his usual method then with his disciples, and with others who listened to

him, and gave symptoms of an *incipient* faith, we shall recollect, that the mode in which he at first rewarded, and encouraged, and improved it, was not generally by an explicit declaration. He was not wont directly to add to their stock of faith, but to give them the means of doing so, by some fresh exertion of that same candour and docility, which had procured for them the beginnings and rudiments of their belief. In some instances we meet with the success of the experiment recorded; as, for example, in the case of the Syrophœnician woman. On the other hand, instances of the failure of his kind endeavours have also been left on the sacred record, as if for the purpose of awakening the suggestion, that although God be working with us, and within us, yet *we* must work out the salvation which he has procured for us. A very remarkable instance of failure was noticed in the remarks on the eighth chapter of St. Mark; and if we turn to it, and compare together our Lord's behaviour during the conference with his disciples as there recorded, and his dialogue with the young man which we have now read, we cannot fail to be struck with the sameness of the method adopted

by him in both cases; and the more, because in both his success was frustrated by the hardness of heart displayed in the objects of his instruction. It would be needless to repeat the remarks already made on the former instance; and we may therefore confine our attention to those circumstances in the present case, which shew that Christ was throughout the interview giving the young man such *hints*, as would have made him, if he had had sufficient *docility*, a disciple.

Observe then how he replied to the young man's first question. There is not the slightest notice of the subject of his inquiry. Taking advantage of a phrase of courtesy which the young man had employed when speaking to him, our Lord answers, "Why callest thou me good? there is none *good* but one, that is, God." This was his usual method. It was his custom to engraft his instruction on every contingency which would bear it, even an occasional word or action. In this way it is that he adverts to the epithet "good," as applied to himself. And how does he this? Not by rejecting it, and saying that he is not worthy to be called good;

but by reminding the young man of that which he already well knew, that God only was good. Had the young man paused upon the answer, and pondered it in his heart, and followed it up—as was doubtless intended by our Lord—it must have led him to the great truth, that, although none but God was good, yet He who stood before him was good, and this even because he was the Christ—the Son of God—the Immanuel. To give the language of our Lord its full force, we should, in reading the passage, make a pause after each of the sentences, "Why callest thou me *good?*—there is none good but one,—that *is*, God."

No suitable remark, however, was elicited from him so addressed, and the Lord therefore changes the key of his instruction so, as haply to find some other access to his heart and understanding. The youth was wrapped up, it would seem, in his views of the Mosaic law, and in his careful observance of it. Here then might the door of communication to his mind be found. Christ recalls himself therefore to the question originally proposed, and tells him, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery,

Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother," all in a way which seems to intimate this—" Supposing you to continue under the Mosaic dispensation, you of course must expect to inherit life *by keeping all the commandments.*" Now the suggestion, which it was probably intended that this hint should convey, was, that to do so was *impossible*, and that to solve this very difficulty it was that the applicant had sought the man of God. Had the soil of his heart been prepared sufficiently, here then was a clue to his obtaining, by an effort of thought, or rather of humble docile attention, a knowledge of " a more excellent way." But even this attempt failed, and only produced the dull reply, " All these have I observed from my youth." He did not even perceive the force of the remark respecting the *perfect* observance of the Law, but spoke of having kept it all, as far as it could be kept.

It is beautiful to trace the unwearied and anxious search of the Saviour even after a single lost one of the great human fold. His last reply is put in a way calculated to rouse the applicant, and (if he were susceptible of it) certainly to call

into exercise his attention and inquisitiveness. He startles him with the assertion, that, even although all the terms of the present covenant were fulfilled, there would be something "lacking." St. Matthew's account is rendered more emphatic by the introduction of the word "*perfect*," which contains an obvious reference to the imperfect character and results of the old dispensation[b]. "If thou wilt be *perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, and follow me[c]."

And now, why did not such an assertion rouse the youth to inquiry? Our Lord has told us. He had connected it with a test—with a proposal of such paramount interest to the young man—that it forthwith absorbed his attention, and caused him to dismiss the original question altogether. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," was probably the unuttered language of his mind, as he went from the presence of our Lord. He

[b] τέλειος. It is in the same way that τέλος, or "the end," is put for the Christian dispensation.

[c] Matth. xix. 21.

was not "little child" enough to enter into the kingdom of God; but he had come to Christ, and Christ would not cast him out. He had come to Christ, and Christ accordingly gave him the full means and opportunity of believing, even as he had done to his disciples. His anxious endeavour to awaken his faith is apparent throughout the interview; and in the last attempt is very forcibly marked by the Evangelist's graphic description, "Jesus beholding him loved him." St. Matthew has omitted it, but St. Peter, under whose superintendence St. Mark's Gospel was written, had too much reason to remember the impressive character of our Saviour's look, to have left this little circumstance unrecorded.

His look indeed appears to have given an emphasis to many of those hints which he designed for exciting the attention and inquisitiveness of his hearers. Thus, in the sequel of the present narrative, he is described as giving force by a look to a remark, which was no doubt designed to prepare the minds of the disciples for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's assistance. When they remarked that the circumstances of a great portion of the world must exclude them

from obtaining admission into his kingdom, "Jesus *looking upon them* saith, With *men* it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." The hint itself corresponded with the observation which he had only just before made to the young man, "there is none good but one—that is, God." It was an early link in the chain of revelation which tells us, that the requisitions of Christianity are impracticable to unassisted man, but that man is not left to himself. The Christian is *regenerate*—a new nature is given to him—a new birth into otherwise unattainable righteousness; and it is "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness[d]," who will be able to accomplish things that are impossible to men, because "it is God which worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure[e]," and, "with God all things are possible."

This remark, however, with which our Lord now directed his look from the young man to his disciples, was for the present as ineffectual as his dialogue with the young man himself. St. Peter, in the name of the rest, expressed

[d] Ephesians iv. 24. [e] Philippians ii. 13.

the feeling which seems to have been prevalent amongst them, notwithstanding repeated rebukes and corrections—that his kingdom being near, they were to share the honours and rewards of it. "We," he reminds the Lord, "have left all and have followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Our Saviour's reply seems at first sight, instead of a fresh rebuke, to be an encouragement; by holding out to their mistaken ambition a promise of reward in *kind* in this life, as well as of future happiness. But the introduction of "persecutions" in this train of promised wealth and greatness, as if forming their distinguishing character, at once nullifies the first impression made by the promise, and affixes to it an interpretation well adapted to the frame of mind which it must have been designed to correct and improve. Christ had more than once of late reproved the temporal and worldly views of his apostles respecting his kingdom. Still the feeling again and again displayed itself; and his reply now seems to be purposely framed with reference to it, and to be made in this spirit—"The reward about which you are speaking shall be an hundredfold more than you have relinquished—but as to the

present life, it shall be a sort of property, dominion, and influence, whose chief feature shall be persecution[f]—it is in a period to come, that you are to expect the life eternal." Our Lord's language is that of serious irony, the severity of which is greatly increased, first, by the double enumeration of sacrifices made, and of recompences in kind; and then, by the mention of persecution, (the circumstance which qualifies and changes the whole character of the promise,) being suspended until the close of the enumeration. In a free paraphrase of the original, it might be expressed thus—"Lands, houses, and brethren you have left; and, in lieu of these, lands, houses, and brethren you shall have: but they shall be the land of the exile, the house of the imprisoned martyr, the many brethren, the

[f] St. Paul seems to have adopted the same form when he told the Romans, τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν, ἄνθρακας πυρὸς σωρεύσεις ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ. (Rom. xii. 20.) i. e. this is the way you are to "heap coals of fire on his head," alluding to our Lord's rebuke to St. Peter, when he desired Christ to call down fire from heaven. It is a figure of speech, like βίος οὐ βιωτὸς, γάμος ἄγαμος, and the like expressions, so common in Greek poetry. So too, Isaiah li. 21. "Thou drunken, but not with wine."

first born of whom shall be esteemed stricken of God, and his name a cause of your being hated of all men."

CHRIST'S DECLARATION THAT HE WAS TO BE BETRAYED, PUT TO DEATH, AND RISE AGAIN.

Ver. 32—34.

And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Agreeably with the view given in the preceding section, of Christ's words to his disciples, we find him, in the very next portion of the narrative, again telling them plainly those circumstances about his future career, which were incompatible with their obstinate view of his kingdom. They had grounds now for believing on him, in spite of so much that was incomprehensible to them in his proceedings; and all

amazed they found him journeying still onwards to Jerusalem, and to certain death. Nevertheless they followed him, assured that he was the Christ, and expecting, no doubt, some miraculous solution of a difficulty which to them seemed inexplicable. His plain avowal of his approaching death, only seems to have kept alive this state of suspense and surmise, without at all tending to remove it. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory[s]?" was applicable to them even to the last period of their earthly intercourse with their Master.

THE AMBITIOUS REQUEST OF JAMES AND JOHN, THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE.

Ver. 35—45.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized

[s] Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

with? And they say unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

That all Christ now said, about the near approach of his kingdom, was interpreted by the apostles in the sense in which every Jew expected the renewal of the theocracy, is evident from the request of James and John. They asked for posts of honour; and it was in vain that our Saviour, by allusion to the cup which his Father had given him to drink, and the baptism or *immersion* of the grave through which he was to pass, endeavoured to awaken them to a sense of their error. He was obliged plainly to tell them, that, what he was going to purchase for them—

that which made it expedient for him to go away—was not the *prizes* of his kingdom, but the *means* of obtaining them. "To sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."

BARTIMÆUS RESTORED TO SIGHT.

Ver. 46—52.

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus, (the son of Timæus,) sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Besides the indication of divine power and divine mercy displayed in this miracle, its *moral*—its instructive character—is also apparent. The

disciples had now been familiarized with this secondary and peculiar application of miracles by Christ. In cases of blindness removed especially, they had been more than once directed to the symbolical notice conveyed concerning a *partial* blindness of heart, and the *gradual* removal of it in their case, as well as to that total blindness which characterized those who were not in the train of our Lord's followers. On the occasion particularly noticed in chapter viii. when his repeated instructions had not been understood, we may remember that his discourse was followed up by a very remarkable cure of blindness. Here we have a similar instance of dulness to another lesson, followed up as before by the same symbolical reproof. It was our Lord's custom even to repeat instruction that *had* been understood; but there was much more reason for doing so, when it had not at first produced the due impression. At this moment certainly the apostles appear to have required the continual renewal of the warning—that to many important features of Christianity they were still blind; that they still needed to apply for sight to Christ, and were still to hope for it only by persevering in faith.

This view of the miracle does not interfere with its more essential character, that of its being wrought in evidence of his divine power, at a critical season, when his followers were amazed and staggered at his continuing his progress steadily to Jerusalem[b]. Nor again does it prevent us from considering it as an act of mercy too towards the bodily affliction of Bartimæus. It was doubtless more than an act of mercy to him; it was a reward and strengthening of his faith—faith the more truly Christian, because his calamity had precluded him from witnessing the miracles of Jesus. Notwithstanding his blindness, he had gathered the report of them, and so devoutly, and humbly, and candidly had he pondered on them, and on all he heard of the marvellous person who wrought them, that he recognized in him the Son of David.

Both as evidence, and also as symbolical instruction then, this miracle was very needful for the apostles in their then circumstances; and besides these uses, the character of Bartimæus's faith might have furnished no slight additional instruction. He, like them, acknowledged in their

[b] See ver. 32. and John xi. 8.

Master—the Son of David—the heir of the approaching kingdom; but he did not ask the monarch whose notice he had attracted for lands, houses, and bounty. No; as if purposely to set Bartimæus's disposition in contrast with the request of James and John, and the unexpressed feelings of the other apostles; Christ, instead of asking him if he believed, bade him tell him what it was *he* petitioned for. "What wilt thou that I should do *for thee*[1]? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my *sight.*" Whether the afflicted believer himself intended by the expression the removal of more than literal blindness, may be doubted; but the answer may have been no less serviceable, as conveying a suggestion of that need to the apostles, by way of reproof to them.

And with respect to Bartimæus himself too, there might have been more than the mere natural desire of enjoying the use of his eyes, which prompted his application, and which called forth the approbation of Christ on his faith. Hitherto resting his belief on the report of others,

[1] Τί θέλεις ποιήσω σοι; It is incorrectly rendered in our version, What wilt thou that I should do *unto thee?*

connected with his own knowledge of Scripture, the feeling of his heart, when he exclaimed, "that I might receive my sight," might have been like that of good Simeon's—a longing to satisfy himself more perfectly, by the evidence of sight, of that which he had hitherto otherwise proved—a longing to *see* the Messiah. Having recovered the use of his eyes, he could not, it would seem, leave Jesus. He followed him to look on him as well as to hear him. On his heart, if not on his lips, was surely Simeon's prayer of thanksgiving, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation[k]."

[k] Luke ii. 29, 30.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRIST'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM.

Ver. 1—10.

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. And they went their way, and found the cold tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosannah in the highest.

CHRIST'S entrance into Jerusalem is declared by St. Matthew, in his narrative of the event, to have been a fulfilment of a prophecy, and by reference to that prophecy it must be explained. Before referring however to the passage of Zechariah, which contains the prediction in question[a], one general remark may be useful on the character of the prophecies which relate to Christ. They will be found on examination to fall under one of the three following heads. I. Prophecies in which the event was simply to correspond with the literal assertion; as that Bethlehem was to be the place of his birth. II. Prophecies in which the assertion was to be fulfilled only figuratively; of this kind are the predictions that he should *reign*, be a *conqueror*, and many others. III. Prophecies which were to be fulfilled both literally and figuratively. To this head belong all those of Isaiah respecting his opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, and performing other miracles, which were symbolical of Christ's ministry as well as evidence of his divine mission.

[a] Zechariah ix. 9.

Of these last then, there are some few—the one to which this event in St. Mark relates among them—whose literal fulfilment does not seem to have made part of the design of the prophecy, because in itself the action was unimportant; but still, to have been fulfilled literally by Christ, *in order to direct the attention to the prophecy;* and, by doing so, to teach the figurative meaning conveyed both in the prophet's language, and in his own symbolical action, which was, as it were, the embodying of that figurative languge.

Zecharias had prophesied of our Saviour under the image of a king, who was to come, according to the simple state of the early rulers of Israel, their judges, and their lawgiver Moses himself, sitting on an ass. This description was intended as a contrast to the grandeur assumed by their later sovereigns; and still more to the pomp and circumstance which had characterised the mighty conquerors of the world, such as Cyrus and Alexander. Following up this contrast, he goes on to describe the Messiah's figurative reign, as in other respects opposed to a reign of earthly conquest, earthly pomp, and earthly dominion,

" I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen ; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." In short, the whole passage is a figurative description of Jerusalem's future king, and his universal kingdom; containing amongst its images some which contradict its literal interpretation, and which were doubtless inserted in order that a literal interpretation should not be put on it. He was to be " a king," and yet he was to be " lowly ;" " his dominion" was to be " from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth," and yet " the chariot," and " the battle bow," were to be " cut off" from Ephraim and Jerusalem. It is among these qualifying images, that his riding on an ass instead of the war horse, is introduced immediately in contrast with the mention of his being a king.

Now as this prophecy was one which especially pointed out (if these circumstances were attended to in the interpretation of it) the real nature of Christ's kingdom—or rather, as it especially contradicted the prevailing notion of a

temporal king and conqueror, nothing could be more seasonable, than that Christ should follow up all the many discussions which of late he had held with his apostles on the subject, by some act which might bring this prophecy vividly before their minds, and enable them, by connecting it with all he had said, to correct their obstinate notion respecting him. To those on the other hand who were not yet become his followers, the literal fulfilment of a well-known prediction concerning Christ, would point him out as the person claiming to be Zion's King; and if they perceived the event, although in itself nothing extraordinary, and such as an impostor might have fulfilled, yet so connected with a miracle, as that none but "the prophetic King" could have *so fulfilled it*; then, to these also, the symbolical lesson, the histrionic interpretation of Zecharias, would be likely to prove the means of conversion and faith.

Let us see then in what way the transaction took place, and what are the results recorded. Our Lord sends two of his disciples to bring an ass, which they were to find at a given place, ready for them to take; the owner of which was,

upon their saying that the Lord had need of it, to give it up. All this implies, that some revelation must have been made to the owners of the animal, of which the *confirming sign* would be the arrival of these two men, claiming it under certain circumstances which accorded with the revelation; even as the arrival of Cornelius's messengers at Peter's house in Joppa after the vision to the apostle, was a sign that the vision was true. For the apostles, who had already witnessed so many of Christ's miracles, no additional one would perhaps have been requisite, in order to make them believe that the prophecy of Zecharias was fulfilled in Jesus, when they beheld him riding on an ass into Jerusalem; but it was clearly requisite for others, who had not been so circumstanced. When Isaiah predicted, that he should open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf; the principal design of the prophecy might have been—perhaps the only one—that he should remove a spiritual dimness from the hearts and understandings of men. When he literally fulfilled these prophecies, nobody could doubt that he was the person intended by the prophecy in its fullest signification; be-

cause the literal fulfilment involved in each case a miracle. But here the circumstances were different. The event predicted was not of itself miraculous; and it was therefore necessary so to fulfil it, as to render it miraculous. Christ did this; and hence probably the readiness with which he was hailed by crowds as he passed on his way; the owners of the ass doubtless making known the event, and communicating to others the grounds of their own faith—the miraculous circumstance (whatever it was) which had wrought on them to give it up at the bidding of strangers, and without a single demur.

Much of the force and significancy of the whole scene here described depends, it would seem, on the animal whereon our Saviour rode being an ass. For, in the prophecy, it is opposed to the horse, which, together with other marks of a temporal monarch's greatness, was to be "cut off" from Jerusalem. And yet, St. Mark leaves the description doubtful by the use of a word which merely signifies "foal[b]," and which is accordingly interpreted in our Bibles "a colt." This word is indeed applicable to the foal of an

[b] πῶλος.

ass, as well as of an horse; yet when used by itself, as in this passage, it would be more naturally applied to the latter. St. Matthew's narrative however leaves no room to doubt which it was, and the only inquiry suggested is, why St. Mark should have been thus ambiguous; why using the word "foal," or "colt," he did not, like St. Matthew, give the quotation from Zecharias, which would have prevented all ambiguity.

The question seems to admit of a very plausible solution. St. Mark was writing for the Christians of Rome; St. Matthew for those of Judæa. With the latter, not only the eastern habits, but the record of the simple manners of their early rulers, who rode on asses, made these animals appear any thing but mean in their eyes; but in the minds of the Romans, the mention of them was associated with ludicrous and degrading ideas. Had St. Mark then used the word ass, he might to the great mass of the Christians, for whom he wrote, have given the whole scene an air of ridicule, to which he of course would avoid exposing it. At the same time he would have been false in his account, and would have destroyed the main circumstance in the incident,

had he called the animal a horse. He therefore, no doubt, designedly used an ambiguous expression, which those versed in the Jewish Scriptures would understand aright, because they remembered the words of Zecharias; while to a new Christian convert from heathenism, or to a heathen then first reading his narrative, his description would convey nothing ludicrous. Afterwards too, when the same disciple was more fully instructed, and became acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures, they would direct him to the true import of the word; and thus he would understand all the character of the incident, just when he was prepared for profiting by it.

THE WITHERING OF THE FIG TREE.

Ver. 12—14. 20—26.

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.——And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree

which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

As a miracle, performed for the purpose of *confirming the faith* of the disciples in Christ, the withering of the fig tree could scarcely have been needed, after so splendid a series as they had by this time witnessed. The action was more probably a symbol, made miraculous in order to fix the attention more strongly on it. And this it was the more likely to do, because, although as an exercise of power, it exhibited less that was striking than most of his miracles on record; yet it must have attracted their especial notice, because it differed in character from all—or rather from all but one; and this very difference connected it the more strongly with the

event which it was meant obviously to typify—the fate of his barren hearers.

All Christ's miracles which are recorded had a benevolent object, except this and the sending the devils into the herd of swine. All the rest were not merely indifferent in their results on the welfare of mankind, but positively beneficial. Whilst he proved by them his power, and typified his doctrines, he at the same time proclaimed the benevolent character of that mission which he was thus attesting and explaining. But in the display of mercy towards mankind, there were two traits of severity which made part of the scheme, and which, as they had been pointedly taught in all the other modes of instruction adopted by him, could not suitably perhaps have been omitted in his symbolic method. The first of these points was his destruction of the works of Satan—the second, his exclusion of unrepentant man also from his scheme of grace. The former of these awful truths was communicated by the miracle which exhibited the devils, and together with the devils, those *impure* animals possessed by them, as urged headlong and hopeless down a precipice, and cast into

the sea to perish. In the present symbol the latter act of severity is, no doubt, prefigured, by the curse on the barren fig tree. Immediately and primarily it declared the fate of Jerusalem; but it was a lesson more extensive, and doubtless applicable to all God's creatures, who then or hereafter should be visited by the Saviour or his Comforter, and yet fail to repent and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

From the natural expressiveness of the image, it would seem to have been intelligible without further comment. Indeed, if it had formed the terms of a metaphor, and that metaphor had been used by our Lord, under any marked circumstances, it would probably have been afterwards called to mind and applied by the hearers to the fate of the Jewish nation. But if we look back on the gradual progress of his instruction, this miracle had been long provided with a comment and exposition in those frequent metaphors derived from the productiveness of the earth and its plants, with which he had from time to time familiarized their minds. Sometimes it was a parable made up of these images; sometimes an allusion to the parable already expounded; some-

times a reference to present objects of agriculture or of the spontaneous production of the fields in which he was teaching; at other times it was a figure of speech which merely recalled these scenes to the imagination. And besides this general train of images, not long before this miracle of the fig tree, and in his journey to Jerusalem, Christ had predicted the fate of the holy city and nation under a parable of the fig tree. St. Mark has omitted the parable, but St. Luke records it[c]. These occasional omissions of each Evangelist, which, when supplied from the other, throw so much light on the consecutive method of instruction adopted by our Lord, leave us room to conjecture, that our view of his ministry would be infinitely more clear and easy, if some of the facts which *all* have omitted could be recovered. But He who controlled the pen of holy record knew best; and whether it be that greater exercise of docility, of faith, and of humility is called forth; or that some object is attained unperceived by ourselves, it is no doubt wisest and best that it should be so. Our duty

[c] Chap. xiii. 6.

is to make the best use of that light which we have; for then only, to him that hath, will more be given. Even this miracle cannot be considered as the last lesson in the connected series; for it was doubtless by way of following it up further that, after his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, he adds, "now learn the parable of the fig tree," as if this prophecy illustrated and explained it.

In the narrative of the miracle there is something more that requires notice. The words, "for the time of figs was not yet," cannot be meant to account for Christ's disappointment, as if it were natural, but to indicate why he expected to find fruit on the fig tree. The time of *gathering in figs*—the *fig-harvest*—was not yet; and it was reasonable therefore to expect that fruit should be found on a tree, which, from its appearance at a distance, exhibited no signs of barrenness. Abundant in leaves, yet unprovided with fruit against the time of its visitation; it suggested an analogy in this respect between it and the devoted people of which it was a type; and which was truly not only barren of fruit meet for repentance, but abundant in all that outward

shew which promised much, and yet was accompanied by none.

Another circumstance, which may likewise have been intended as a minute point of coincidence in the analogy, is, that the blight of the accursed fig tree was not a partial, not a temporary one, but utter irrecoverable decay. "They saw the fig tree withered *from the roots.*" It was Jerusalem's final doom, and the image exhibits, to us at least, a mournful and solemn coincidence with the rejected Saviour's lamentation over the holy city, the approaching destruction of which he had pronounced only two days before. To us indeed it suggests, and was intended to suggest, a picture even more awful and awakening—the last state of God's unrepentant Church in every age, and under all His dispensations. He hath appointed a day; and that plant of His which shall have put forth no fruit by that day, will be "withered from the roots." The dews of heaven will fall, but not to revive that plant; there will be a worm within it that dieth not; and it will be cut down and cast into a fire that is not quenched.

There is still another circumstance about this miracle, which deserves to be noticed; it is the

instruction which it gave occasion to, unconnected with its symbolical import. The Lord's behaviour on the failure of his disciples to cast out the devils, and his permission to a stranger to effect what they could not, was noticed in its proper place. Here we are come to a renewal of the lesson then given to them. On the apostles expressing surprise at the effect of the curse pronounced on the fig tree, Christ intimates to them at once the extent of miraculous power with which they were to be invested, and the limitations and conditions of its exercise—limitations and conditions which were perpetually to distinguish their authority from his. His language contains, not only the promise elsewhere expressed by "these miracles, and greater than these shalt thou do;" but the caution also before given, that their miracles could not be wrought like his, by their own independent authority, but by prayer and the other forms to which he had attached his promise of success, and which formed the legal acknowledgment of the tenure by which they held their authority. He accordingly tells them—and this most solemnly—that if they bade the mountain remove and be cast into the sea, it should

obey; but cautions them against the probable grounds of failure to which as dependent agents they were subject[d]. They were to *pray* that their command may be effectual, and to *trust* that it would be so.

CHRIST'S BEHAVIOUR IN THE TEMPLE.

Ver. 11. 15—19. 27—33.

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.——And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city.——And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests,

[d] It should be remarked, that for an offence in this respect, Moses was punished by being forbidden to enter the promised land. See Numbers xx. 7—13.

and the scribes, and the elders, and say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

In literal accordance with Christ's avowal, that he taught daily in the temple, we find him there the three first days of his final visit to Jerusalem. On the first, he merely makes his appearance; on the second, he exercises an authority which implied his having come, as the prophet expresses it, into *his* temple[e]; on the third, the Jewish rulers demand of him the grounds of so unheard of an assumption of authority.

To explain why the temple should have become the resort of money changers, and persons who sold doves, it must be observed, that all who

[e] Malachi iii. 1.

came up to the great festivals, contributed a small sum to the treasury of the temple. Now as many came from abroad—from Alexandria and Asia Minor, for instance—it was found a convenience, and worth the while of merchants, to provide the current coin of Judæa, which alone was received for the treasury, and to exchange it at some little discount with those who had only the foreign coin. The offering of doves is alluded to in the account of Jesus's circumcision [f], and was a custom which sufficiently explains why the traffic in doves also should have been carried on even within the courts of the temple. As both the money and the doves were designed for sacred purposes, the traffic was doubtless on this account thought to be no violation of the sanctity of the house of God.

That Jesus should take on himself to pronounce authoritatively that it was, and to expel these merchants, was naturally regarded by the chief priests, as an action which could only be warranted by an extraordinary divine commission. Had they come to Christ with minds disposed candidly to examine whether this were

[f] Luke ii. 24.

so, they would most assuredly have met with such an answer as might have satisfied and converted them. They came however in a very different temper, and they received therefore a different reply.

This custom of framing his reply according to the temper and design of the questioner, is a feature in Christ's discourses which deserves to be considered; because it has given rise to an objection, that his answers to the Pharisees were not always what we might expect from the author and promulgator of the truth. To those then who came to him with a desire to learn, his words always conveyed, at least, some hint which would enable them to satisfy themselves; a hint doubtless proportioned in its clearness to the candour and faith which it rewarded; a hint not always indeed profited by, but still always given, agreeably to the promises. "To him that hath shall be given." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." To those, on the other hand, who came to him *without* any disposition to learn, his replies were not, it would seem, designed to instruct; nor has the Christian reader of the account which contains these replies, any

ground therefore to apply them as if addressed to himself. They were merely designed to *silence*, to *confound*, and to *rebuke;* and were often accordingly mere arguments *ad hominem*. On this principle should be interpreted his answer to the Jews recorded in the tenth chapter of St. John[g], and others, besides this now under consideration, in which apparently no instruction was intended. On other occasions—as, for instance, in the account given at the beginning of the preceding chapter, and that in the chapter next to this—although the applicants who are represented as putting questions to him, were of the same kind as these priests scribes and Pharisees, and as the Jews mentioned by St. John, we may presume that, for the sake of others who were likewise present, he so framed his answer to them, as not only to silence the cavillers, but to instruct the docile amongst his audience.

[g] Ver. 34, 35.

CHAPTER XII.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

Ver. 1—12.

And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

Our Lord gave as his reason for speaking in parables to those who did not choose to become his regular disciples, "that seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they might hear and not understand." It was a part of the scheme of his ministry, that docility should be evinced before any instruction was afforded; and that instruction, even to the disciples, should be gradually supplied, as they progressively gave signs of improvement in this quality. Consistently with this then, a form of instruction was adopted, which, although unintelligible to the audience in general, was calculated to rouse the attention and inquiry of those amongst them who were well-disposed, and who would thus be led to seek for, and to obtain, his meaning; while, at the same time, it would, like all divine blessings, be ineffectual to those who were unprepared to receive it. Hence his parables were generally so

contrived as to be clear and intelligible to us in after days—to be clear even to his rude audience as soon as expounded—but just obscure enough, to need, in their case, the exposition.

An exception, however, from this general character of our Lord's parables must be made. It is when the information to be conveyed was, as in the present instance, no part of the mystery of redemption, and of the glad tidings of the Gospel—no part of that divine trust, which, like the talent in one of the parables, was the prize of him who already had. The denunciation of God's rejection of the Jews for their abuse of his former grace, was not of a character to require concealment from all but the docile; obviously because, in that case, those above all others to whom it was addressed as a last warning, would have been the very persons excluded from receiving it.

Although therefore this warning is here conveyed in a parable, yet it is expressly stated that his hearers required no explanation of it; but readily understood it, and would gladly, if they could have done it safely, have forthwith apprehended him for his boldness. St. Matthew's

Gospel[a] gives indeed a few words, which our Lord added, in the form of an explanation, so that the dullest might not now be uninformed; but the particular imagery of the parable, the pointed and circumstantial detail of several features of analogy, combined with his previous conduct in the temple, must of themselves have been misunderstood by few, and few could have needed the exposition. In the same figure of a vineyard and a pleasant vine, digged about and carefully tended, and yet proving unfruitful, and unprofitable to the owner, Isaiah had, seven hundred years before this, forewarned his countrymen of the loss of God's favour[b]; and the close agreement between the Lord's language, and the language of that prophecy, was too striking to be unnoticed. The minute circumstance of the hedge of separation, which protected the vine from the intrusion of the stranger, and distinguished it from the common or the possession of others—the tower built there too—were images, which, to a people habituated to instruction and revelation through types and figures, must

[a] Chap. xxi. 43. [b] Chap. v. 1—7.

have readily suggested the fence-work of rites and rules by which God had separated them from the profane Gentile world, as well as the holy tower—the temple—to which the Lord of the vineyard attached the manifestation of his providence.

The other images are equally apposite, and, when combined into one picture, form so graphic an allegory, that none of our Lord's hearers could have been blind to the intended meaning. The servants sent from time to time were disregarded, abused, and even killed—so had the Jews done unto the prophets, even to the last and greatest, John Baptist. Then finally comes one, who is called "the beloved Son" of the Master; and the scene closes with the plot against his life, and the sentence which should await the murderers, if they executed it. And this too they could not fail to apply to him, against whose life they were conscious of plotting at that very time.

Observe too, it is not simply *a* son, whom the lord of the vineyard is represented as sending, nor *his* son, but his "*beloved* son;" and this expression has a force which must not be overlooked. In one sense—namely, as our Creator

and Preserver—God represents himself as the Father of all. To his elect people the Jews, as to us Christians, He was eminently and peculiarly so; and to the obedient more especially still He was a father and they his children[c]. But Him whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost, He called his "beloved Son," to denote a difference arising out of the union of the divine and human nature, which gave him a title to this character, resting on different grounds from any on which others claimed it. At the baptism of Christ accordingly, when the miraculous union was testified and confirmed both by a vision and a voice, the term was then so used, as to exclude all ambiguity in its after use—to denote that "the anointed Son of God" was not so called as we are, because created of God—chosen of God—obedient to

[c] See the use of the expression "sons of God," opposed to "daughters of men," in Gen. vi. 2. 4. also Job i. 6. Hosea i. 10. If the words "then first began men to *call upon* the name of the Lord," be properly, as some assert, "then began men to be called *by the* name of the Lord," it must have reference to the same fact. St. John, i. 12, 13. applies the old appellation to Christians, and points out how they are entitled to it beyond all others who are merely men, namely, from being born of God through the Spirit.

God; but as partaking of the divine uncreated essence in a way distinct from all others. Now the Jews, from their familiarity with the prophetic name Immanuel connected with other prophecies, must have expected in their Messiah, "God manifested in the flesh," a Being whose relation to Jehovah should be different from that of Moses, or their prophets. When our Lord therefore emphatically told them, that, after all the other messengers of the lord of the vineyard had failed, "the *beloved* son" was to come, one distinct from all sons and servants, the hint could hardly have been misunderstood. Once more, they must either have recognized his claims, or have held him guilty of blasphemy, for so applying to God the title of his Father, as to make himself equal with God. It was not the bare charge of their conspiring against his life which now made their malice more malicious, but the charge of conspiring against *the beloved Son of God.*

THE QUESTION OF CERTAIN PHARISEES AND HERODIANS.

Ver. 13—17.

And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him[d] in his words. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

The temptation, or test, or snare, consisted in this. As was lately observed, the unbelieving hearers were full of malice, on account of our Lord's claim to be the Messiah, "the beloved Son of God." Now in asking him whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar they (with their

[d] ἀγρεύσωσι. This metaphor is very characteristic of men who were mostly fishermen, and whom accordingly our Lord was wont to designate as his future "fishers of men."

minds fixed on the Messiah's temporal theocracy) made sure of effecting one of two things. They thought, he must either, by asserting the legality of Cæsar's claims, renounce his own claim to be the Messiah—a claim but now so forcibly asserted; or else, by denying it, make himself amenable to the civil authorities. The Herodians, a political sect, accordingly took part in the insidious embassy; because the object was to involve him in a charge not of a religious, but of a civil character—a charge of treason against the Roman government. His answer is agreeable to this view of the question, (the artifice which suggested it being of course known to him,) and contains a hint which they could not fully comprehend, although the pithy nature of the reply silenced them. "They marvelled." His remark concerning the superscription and image on the coin, as connecting the tribute with *civil authority*, and the opposition which he makes between such demands and the things *belonging to God*, intimate a new character in the Messiah's theocracy, in which the ecclesiastical should no more interfere with the civil rule; or the obedience of the subject to the human magistrate, be incon-

sistent with the obedience of the believer to God. Cæsar's dominion was to be one, Christ's another. Jesus was a King, but not of this world.

THE QUESTION OF CERTAIN SADDUCEES.

Ver. 18—27.

Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

Our Lord we see was acceptable to neither of the two leading parties amongst his countrymen. The Pharisees and their adherents objected to the character of his kingdom in this world; the Sadducees and their party to his kingdom in another world. As the Pharisees had been put to silence, the Sadducees now try their skill in argument with him, and present him with an imaginary case, which, in their view, seemed to render the doctrine of a future state inconsistent with the Mosaic law. By that law[e] it was ordered, that, "if brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her." Here is a case, they meant to say, which proves the absurdity of supposing that God designs man for a future state; because, if the woman and her many husbands were to return to existence, must not the husbands revive incompatible claims to the same wife?

It is to be observed, that the Mosaic law did

[e] Deut. xxv. 5.

not teach the doctrine of a future state. On this singular omission, Warburton has built an argument for the divine appointment of Moses, and the existence of an extraordinary Providence, with the Jewish people. For, argues he, no other people in the world ever were kept under government, without this doctrine; Moses therefore, who must have been aware of this great instrument of state-policy, especially from his education in Egypt, the parent of early lawgivers, could only have neglected to make use of it, through positive divine prohibition, and from his assurance of the exercise of an extraordinary Providence—the only substitute[r].

At the same time, even in the books of Moses are contained intimations, which, like the obscure types of the ceremonial law, were unintelligible indeed at the time when they were delivered, and purposely so; but yet contained a reference to the doctrine, which became obvious as soon as that doctrine had been revealed by Christ. For Moses to have *taught* a future state of reward and punishment, would have been an anticipation of the peculiar feature of Christianity—"the

[r] Divine Legation of Moses.

bringing life and immortality to light;" still, this does not forbid that the doctrine should have been so *implied* in the communications made by God to His people under the Law, as that certain passages, when explained by an after revelation, should bear undoubted reference to it. These hints became gradually enlarged and made clearer and clearer, through the prophets; and thus, although there was no *authority* for the doctrine in the Jewish creed, yet, by the time of our Saviour's birth, the more learned, and indeed the greater portion of the nation, thought a future state most consistent with God's revealed word, and therefore maintained the doctrine. The Sadducees objected, and in their arguments confined themselves to the books of Moses, as the source of the original Mosaic institution—the test of that conformity and orthodoxy, which was binding on all members of the Jewish communion. Hence our Lord's reply is taken, not only from this portion of the Scriptures, but from the very scene in which God is described as first appointing Moses to be his messenger, and his lawgiver.

To understand the force of the quotation, we

must refer to the third chapter of Exodus, from which it is taken; bearing in mind one religious view which prevailed in the world at the period of the Jewish lawgiver's call—the *locality* attributed to all the objects of worship. All nations were then worshipping, each his own gods or tutelary genii, attached to a people, a district, a mountain, or a grove. The Egyptian, the Moabite, and every heathen, had each *his god* in this sense; and it was no strange notion which the Syrians entertained, when they said of the Israelites, "Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they[f]." In accommodation to this, among other rooted prejudices to which incipient revelation accommodated itself, it was first as a tutelary deity, as *their god*, by contradistinction, that Jehovah made himself known to the Jews and to Moses. When they received God's first call, their notion of the locality of a

[f] 1 Kings xx. 23. Balak's endeavour to obtain a curse on Israel from Balaam, by making him shift his place, was probably part of the same superstition. See Numbers xxiii. xxiv.

deity—his attachment to places and persons—was so predominant, as possibly to make another view of Him unintelligible. The declaration, accordingly, that Jehovah was *their* God, because *Abraham's God*, supposes this prejudice as yet strong, and becomes equivalent to language such as this. "The Egyptians have their gods, the Canaanites are protected by theirs, but I am He attached to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." What then—our Lord's words imply—what then must the Israelites have understood from this, respecting the condition of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Surely, that they were at that time in existence, for them to be called God's peculiar subjects—and for Jehovah, in contradistinction to the god of Egypt and Canaan, and of other places and people then existing, to be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Nor let any of us, from a conscious superiority of religious knowledge, think meanly of a revelation, which invested the God of all the earth with so narrow and unworthy a character. God's ways are not our ways; and this particular instance, at least, was, after all, in strict con-

formity with his usual dispensations. He gives his light gradually, and as men can bear it. The incompleteness of the believer's view arises not from any defect in the revelation, but from his own condition and nature. Our present notions of God may be far more narrow with respect to the knowledge for which we are destined in a future state, than compared with ours, this incipient revelation of the Israelites. "*We see*," was the fatal boast of the scribes and Pharisees. Let us not say, "Lord, we thank thee that we are not blind, as others have been, or even as thy once favoured people;" but let us pray, that we may receive our sight.

Gradually the Israelites themselves were led to a more perfect knowledge of God. The first express declaration, that their God was the God of all the earth, was made on the solemn occasion of his manifestation on Mount Sinai, three months after their departure from Egypt. "Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: *for all the earth is mine.* And ye shall be unto me a king-

dom of priests, and an holy nation[g]." In the last words the allusion is to the assertion God makes, that all people are His; and intimates that he intends to select, set apart, and sanctify, as it were, the Jews; so that they should be to the God of all the earth, what the priests were to the tutelary gods of each nation. With them, as with a sacerdotal order in the universal people of God, were entrusted the mysteries of truth; and they only communicated with the deity, and were acquainted with his dealings.

To return to the passage read from St. Mark. In the latter part, the Sadducees are said to have denied the existence of angels as well as the resurrection. Our Lord's illustration of the future state of man, therefore, from the condition of "the angels which are in heaven," was a reproof to them for both errors; although, as the latter only was the subject in question, and obviously the more important, the latter only was fully disproved.

[g] Exodus xix. 5, 6.

QUESTION OF ONE OF THE SCRIBES.

Ver. 28—34.

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

In reading this incident, we should not omit to notice the striking contrast it exhibits to the two former cases. Unlike the arrogant and insidious Pharisees and Herodians; unlike too the prejudiced Sadducees, the scribe who now questioned our Lord, really seeks for information, and has

some preparation of heart; although not quite enough, it would seem, at that time, to enable him to understand and be converted. He was not "*far* from the kingdom of God." Observe therefore the very different character of our Saviour's reply to him. Agreeably to his usual method, he had silenced and confounded the former uncandid and indocile questioners, by answers which only exposed their weakness. But his words to the scribe are such as would seem to encourage further inquiry, and to involve no reproach on his understanding or his heart.

As to the ground of his inquiry, it probably arose from the opposition, which, in the nice questions of Pharisaical learning, was made between the importance of observing the outward acts of religion, and of practising the moral duties, and cherishing inward piety. The tone of religion among the learned evidently inclined strongly to the former—the ceremonial law was in greater repute than the moral. Hence our Lord's own words afterwards, "Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost

rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation." In these words he opposes their rigid observance of all that was ritual, and religious in appearance, to what are emphatically termed "the weightier matters of the law." Some scruples with reference to this general corruption might have crossed the mind of the scribe, when he asked Christ "which was the first commandment of *all*." The ten commandments are called simply *the* commandments; the introduction therefore of the word *all*, implies that he directed the question to the whole of what was commanded by God, through Moses, and the Prophets—ceremonies and moral precepts. Our Lord understands the drift of his question, and accordingly so replies, as to declare that not only the first of the moral code was more important than the first of the ceremonial, but that the whole of the moral law was weightier than any part of the ceremonial. This is the first commandment *of all*, says he, repeating the words of the commandment; and not only does this stand before the ceremonial commandments, but the second is like unto it—like it in prece-

dence and superior weight—and better, according to the scribe's own comment, "than *all* the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices [b]."

CHRIST'S REMARKS RESPECTING THE SCRIBES.

Ver. 35—40.

And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly. And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market-places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

In the preceding statement, we have seen a scribe discontented with the view of his fellow-scribes respecting the relative importance of the moral and the ceremonial law, and instructed and confirmed in his protest by Jesus. In the passage which follows, our Lord is represented as

[b] Πάντων τῶν ὁλοκαυτωμάτων καὶ θυσιῶν. The article is omitted in our English version, and the force of the sentence thereby destroyed.

weakening the authority of the whole body of scribes or interpreters of the law, by proposing a question for their solution openly in the temple where he was preaching. He asked them to explain in what sense Christ was at once to be "the son of David," and "David's Lord?" Their inability to answer the question was a triumph over them, which was acknowledged by the mass of his hearers; who accordingly "heard him gladly." The impression so produced enabled him to urge, with greater effect, on the half-converted scribe, and on others, the warning with which he follows it up, against the guidance of the scribes either as instructors or as examples.

CHRIST'S OBSERVATION ON A POOR WIDOW'S OFFERING.

Ver. 41—44.

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

This remark should be considered in connection with the preceding instruction and warning. The widow offering her mite, was a present object, on which our Lord hinged the continuance of the lesson he had been giving. He had before warned his hearers against the example of the scribes in many respects; and by his present remark, declares that their most specious virtue, that of liberality, was like all the rest, empty show; inasmuch as even this virtue depended not on the external act, but on the intention and circumstances of the giver.

CHAPTER XIII.

POINTS OF INQUIRY.

Few subjects have caused more perplexity than the prophecy contained in this chapter. By some it has been confined to the destruction of Jerusalem; by others it has been supposed to be a mixed prophecy; embracing, at once, that event, and the literal end of the world. With a view of obtaining, as far as may be, a right notion of its true import and object, it will be useful to consider, I. The assertion with which it concludes—that all should be fulfilled during the generation of those addressed. II. The character of the prophetic language among the Jews, and the probable adoption of it here. III. Whether history bears us out in the interpretation of the prophecy on this principle. IV. Supposing some expressions to be found more properly applicable to the day of judg-

ment, how they are to be reconciled with the declaration of Christ, and the general tenor of prophecy.

THE ASSERTION RESPECTING THE TIME OF THE PROPHECY'S FULFILMENT.

Ver. 28—37.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

The declaration respecting the time of the prophecy's fulfilment closes the whole, and is contained in the last ten verses of the chapter.

The assertion that all should be accomplished within the generation of those present, is made without any qualification; and therefore obliges us not to seek for any in the exposition of the prophecy, unless it be found certainly inapplicable to the events which took place within the period literally prescribed. The time seems indeed to be marked as accurately as it was possible, without fixing "the day and the hour;" for the event was to take place within so short a space as the ordinary life of those already adults, and the several stages of approach to it, most distinctly pointed out.

That "the day and the hour" should have been withheld, seems to have been a natural and reasonable trial of the disciple's faith; who, having observed the progressive accomplishment of the signs, was to be ready when the *last* appeared, for the event itself; and, by his reliance on its certain approach, to shew an exercise of faith in these prophetic signs. But that Christ should avow himself ignorant of "the day and the hour," may seem strange, and requires explanation. If it be so, an objector may say, then was not God manifested in Christ, and Christ could have been

only a messenger divinely inspired, and limited, although in a less degree than others, in his view of the scheme of Providence. What adds force to the difficulty too is, that in the narrative of the Acts, Christ's prediction of the same event is alluded to, and to the prediction a similar avowal is appended. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power[1];" that is, set apart as his peculiar province of knowledge.

It is impossible to explain it by reference to those mysterious distinctions in the divine nature, the existence of which we infer from other parts of Scripture. For, if the terms Father and Son be used in this sentence for the first and second Persons of the Godhead, as so distinguished, it is plain that omniscience is denied to the second Person.

But Christ could not have preached contradictions; and if, in so many parts of his ministry, he has displayed undoubtedly his character

[1] Acts i. 7. ἔθετο ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ. The ἰδίᾳ here gives to the assertion of the Acts the same force as St. Mark's expression, "no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

as "perfect God, and perfect man," he could not have meant now to deny it. If, on one occasion, in accordance with much besides which he did and said, he told his disciples, "All things that the Father hath are mine[k]," by the expression, "what the Father has put in his own power," and by this similar phrase which we meet with in St. Mark, he could not have meant, that any portion of divine knowledge was withheld from him. All evidently that our Lord intended to impress on his disciples was, that the exact knowledge of the time of the coming of his kingdom *was not part of the revelation which they were to receive from him.* This is the only point of view in which the assertion was called for by their question. In this light it was, no doubt, addressed to them, and is to be considered by us; and not (as we may be disposed to regard it) as a revelation about the divine nature.

Nor must we suppose that the expression was at all calculated to suggest any different view at the time. For from the Gospel narratives, especially St. John's, it appears to have been not unusual with our Lord, when contrasting the *manifestation*

[k] John xvi. 15.

of God with his *unperceived incomprehensible existence*, to apply the term "Father," as expressive of the latter[l]. Thus he declares; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father[m]," because, namely, He was God made visible—the manifested, in opposition to the unmanifested, unperceived, incomprehensible nature and existence of God. I should interpret in the same way the following passages, amongst others. "My Father is greater than I[n]," that is, what is manifested of God is not so great and glorious as what is still unrevealed to man. "I go to my Father[o]," that is, God ceases to be manifest in the flesh. "The Comforter," (that is, the Holy Ghost,) "whom I will send unto you from the Father[p]," that is, when God ceases to be manifested in my human nature. It is in this sense, and in allusion to such expressions as these, that God is called in the apostolic language, "the Father *of lights*[q]." If then the term *Father* be employed when a denial of divine manifestation is intended, a very natural way it was to describe a portion of knowledge *not revealed*, by ascribing it to the Father only. It

[l] John x. 30. [m] John xiv. 9. [n] John xiv. 28.
[o] John xvi. 16, 28. [p] John xv. 26. [q] James i. 17.

was equivalent to saying, that it was not designed for any scheme of *revelation*, whether conveyed through men, through angels, or through the manifestation of God in Christ. It seems nothing strange to speak of unrevealed knowledge as attached to God's unrevealed nature; or to say of it, that it belonged not to man, to angels, nor even to the Son, the last and fullest channel of communication. Christ was here speaking of himself as the angel of the new covenant; and this information made no part of the message which, in that character, he was conveying to mankind.

THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHETIC LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT; AND ITS PROBABLE ADOPTION BY OUR SAVIOUR IN THE PRESENT INSTANCE.

It requires but a slender acquaintance with the writings of the Old Testament prophets to enable us to observe the peculiarity of their language. It is not only figurative, but the figures are of the boldest kind, involving analogies so remote, as in some instances to be scarcely discoverable. If revolutions in empires be the subject, the prophetic representation is filled with the disturb-

ance of the laws of the natural world, and the sun, moon, and stars, are exhibited in commotion[r]. If a deliverer is promised to the Jews, the prophet expresses the promise by the rising of a star, and the like[s].

The origin of this style of writing is obvious. It is all, on the face of it, a hieroglyphic translated into verbal description. Supposing the scene, instead of being described in words, to be expressed by those ancient Egyptian symbols, such probably could be the figures which you would find sculptured. That this style should have grown into use among the Israelites from the time of their captivity in Egypt, that is, from their first efforts in any kind of literature, is not surprising. But it must not be thought that hieroglyphics are the peculiar invention of the Egyptians, or the contrivance indeed of any one people. An art resembling theirs must always be the result of the first efforts to record those thoughts which have no exact counterparts in the material world. The Mexican, by painting a ship, could convey intelligence of the arrival of

[r] See especially Isaiah xiii. 10; xxiv. 23; Jeremiah xv. 9; Ezekiel xxxii. 7; Amos viii. 9. [s] Numbers xxiv. 17.

strangers on his coast; and could have recorded thus any mere objects of sight; but a further effort to record abstract ideas—such as strength, superiority, time, age—would force the half-civilized author upon the use of symbols, which suggested these ideas, as qualities conspicuous in the real objects so represented. A lion, for example, would express strength; or again, a symbol would be adopted because of some analogy; as a circle, to denote eternity; or from some accidental association, as a star for destiny, and the like. Thus we recognize in Joseph's dream of the stars which made obeisance to him[t], an indication of the existence amongst the Patriarch's tribe of a mode of expression founded on this custom, before the family of Jacob went down into Egypt; at least if we allow the dream to be in accordance with the usual images of Joseph's mind.

It is not indeed that such figurative language is in the first instance derived from hieroglyphic writing, any more than that this latter is caused by a figurative mode of expression. They are both alike the result of a natural effort to express

[t] Genesis xxxvii. 9.

ideas which have no exact counterparts in the material world. In the formation of the vehicle of thought, suppose the idea to be expressed was "strength," for instance. If it was required to give utterance to this idea first *by word of mouth*, the word uttered would be that which denoted a lion, perhaps, or any other very powerful animal or natural agent. If again the idea "strength" was first required to be expressed *in writing*, the painted or sculptured image of the animal most noted for strength would be the written word. Many abstract terms, in a more polished stage of expression, betray this boldly figurative origin, which must have belonged to all; although time has destroyed their power of suggesting the parent image, as it has in other cases wholly obscured and obliterated it. Take as instances two common words of very different import, connected with the same class of sensible objects, *consideration* and *disaster*. No one can doubt, that in their original formation they were both an emblematic or hieroglyphic use of the stars. Milton has happily recalled the primitive character of the latter in the following lines.

——— as when the sun, new risen,
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse, *disastrous* twilight sheds[u].

One point however is to be observed in the case of the Jewish Scriptures, that the use of this hieroglyphic writing, or rather of language the hieroglyphic characters of which were still apparent, was adopted only when the subject of the inspired writer was either poetry, or a description of some prophetic scene, which, by its nature, required to be shadowed out, and not distinctly described. Perhaps too, by this appropriation of style to certain prophecies, the attention of the people was fixed to them as prophecies; and then it will have answered a similar purpose with some of the methods of instruction adopted by Christ —that of rousing curiosity and impressing the lesson. However this may be, with the Jews this kind of writing from the earliest times characterized prophecy as distinguished from historical relation; and especially those predictions which involved great and important changes in the civil or religious state of the world. To mention one. The vision of the beasts, in which

[u] Paradise Lost, book i. 594.

Daniel declares the succession of the four great empires[x], whether it be the language in which the revelation was made by God to him, or by him to others, is plainly of this description. So too the older prediction of the Gentile prophet Balaam[y].

That our Lord, who taught by symbol and in parables, as if to excite attention by reviving forms of expression nearly obsolete in his day, should also revive this language in his prophecy, is not to be wondered at. By doing so, indeed, he attained a further object of great importance—the obvious connection between his own clearer predictions, and the former hints and obscure revelations of the Old-Testament-prophets. Accordingly, if we compare the images of the prophecy in question with the Old-Testament-Scriptures, we shall find, that they are all derived from thence; from one ancient prophecy especially, which has for its subject the very event predicted by our Lord. He collected, as it were, the detached portions of a great prophetic group of figures found in the Old Testament; and by additions of his own, fitted them into one piece; as the modern artist cements the scattered fragments of ancient

[x] Chap. vii. [y] Numbers xxiv. 17.

sculpture, giving a meaning by combination to that which before was only a disjointed heap—an object of surmise and wonder.

The superior fitness of such terms in our Lord's prophecies over any newly-invented ones of a like character, or over the exclusive use of ordinary language, is so far sufficiently obvious. It remains for us to inquire whether within the period specified—that is, within the date of the generation addressed—events came to pass, which corresponded with these images, and with the rest of the prophecy; and whether these events were of sufficient importance to allow us without hesitation to pronounce that the prophecy has been fulfilled in them.

WHETHER HISTORY BEARS US OUT IN THE APPLICATION OF ALL THE PROPHECY, ACCORDING TO THIS METHOD OF INTERPRETATION.

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE.

Ver. 1—4.

And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and

James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

The temple-service was an essential ingredient, in the constitution of the Jewish polity, and necessary to its very existence. The destruction of the temple was therefore the appropriate sign of God's new kingdom, and the pledge of its establishment. This accordingly is the point to which all the other signs tend, and is itself naturally the last in the series. But on account of the distinct character of this sign, the prophecy begins with it, and then describes the several approximations to it. For the same reason our present inquiry will most properly begin with the question, Whether, within the period of the generation who were alive at the time of the prediction, this event did take place? It was even so. Titus destroyed the temple and city, and passed the ploughshare over its ruins, in token of its being destined by the conqueror to be left desolate for ever. The barren fig tree was now indeed "withered from the roots." We know too, that notwithstanding the attempt of the apostate emperor Julian, and the natural desire of the Jews

in all ages, it has to this day remained unbuilt; although its condition is inconsistent with the existence of the Jews as God's peculiar people; and is the test selected for all generations, of the truth of Christ's assertion, that he was the Messiah, and that the new theocracy is established.

THE RISE OF FALSE CHRISTS.

Ver. 5, 6.

And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

There can be no stronger proof of the full conviction that the Jews of our Saviour's time had, of the period of their Messiah's advent being come, than the ready credulity with which they followed pretender after pretender, and the enthusiasm which anticipated and gave birth to these impostures. "I am come," said our Lord to them, "in my Father's name, (i. e. doing mighty works in my Father's name,) and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, (i. e. claiming to be received on his *bare word*,) him ye will receive[x]." His prophetic declaration

[x] John v. 43.

was most fully verified. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records several instances; and one is alluded to in the history of the Acts under the character of "that Egyptian, which before these days made an uproar, and led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers[y]." This took place, according to Josephus and Eusebius, during the procuratorship of Felix.

WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS.

Ver. 7, 8.

And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

The continual agitation of men's minds during the reigns of Otho and Vitellius, and still more on Vespasian becoming a candidate for the imperial crown, were events in which this prediction of "kingdom rising against kingdom," and war felt, and reported, might be certainly recognized. But, as during all these troubled scenes, the Jews were waiting, with ill-suppressed longings after vengeance, for the vainly-

[y] Acts xxi. 38.

expected signal from a temporal Messiah; this is more probably the specific circumstance pointed at in the hint of "*rumours* of wars." There was, no doubt, a sullen and foreboding murmur going through the nation, such as generally precedes the revolutionary efforts of an oppressed people, long before the rebellion was actually determined on. Without Christ's warning, the disciples might have been induced to expect, that it would lead sooner than it actually did to the final overthrow predicted.

EARTHQUAKES, FAMINES, AND TROUBLES.

Ver. 8.

And there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

To this list of natural evils St. Matthew adds "pestilences[z]." As these are almost the certain result of famine, or great scarcity of food, they may be considered as implied in the account of any remarkable scarcity. Such a famine took place in the fourth year of Claudius Cæsar's reign. It was specifically foretold by Agabus,

[z] Chapter xxiv. 7.

and was the occasion of the first contribution at Antioch for the relief of the Christians of Judæa, who, on the strength of the prediction, were provided against the event[a]. Eusebius states, that the whole Roman empire was affected by it.

Pestilence is also one of the natural effects of an earthquake; and of earthquakes we have a great deal recorded. Besides those which appear from Philostratus, the biographer of Apollonius Tyanæus, to have been felt at this period in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, and Chios; Josephus mentions one which occurred in Judæa while the Idumæans were encamped near Jerusalem. Had this especially happened, without the prophetic check, the Christians might have supposed that the holy city was destined to fall by it in part, and might have abandoned their post before the time determined.

Of tumults, the whole history of the period displays one uninterrupted series; and, as each of these, like the earthquake and the murmuring of the Jews, might have made the time of Jerusalem's fate seem nearer than it really was, we easily

[a] Acts xi. 28.

recognize the propriety of all these being specified as only "the *beginning* of sorrows."

PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

Ver. 9. 11—13.

But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.——But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

For an account of the fulfilment of all this part of the prophetic description, we need not go further than the inspired history itself. The Acts of the Apostles contains an illustration of all the various kinds of persecution here enumerated; and from an allusion in St. Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians [b] to his own, it appears how small a part must have been re-

[b] Chap. xi. 23, 24, 25.

corded by the inspired historian. It is impossible to consider these predictions, in any point of view, without being at the same time struck with their most remarkable feature—their utter inconsistency with the character of an impostor.

The command that when delivered up to their persecutors, the accused should not think beforehand what they were to say, may be considered as a warning that their faith would be especially put to the test on these occasions; and that the evidence of it would be their abandonment of all human arts of eloquence in pleading their cause. Thus each man was provided with a miracle in the use of inspired language, on the occasion when he most needed it; and this miraculous assistance was the appointed reward of his faith in the present prediction.

At the same time, the fact that many should prove too weak for the trial, was foretold; in order that their failure might not be imputed to the weakness of their cause; and that others might be the less likely to yield to the dismay and forlorn feeling, which would be naturally inspired, by finding friends, and kindred, and all men their enemies.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ALL NATIONS.

Ver. 10.

And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

This we know has never been literally fulfilled. How far the wide circulation of the Gospel amongst the various people of the world, before the destruction of Jerusalem, may be considered as an adequate fulfilment, is a point to be considered.

There are two remarks which may be offered in favour of this view. One is, that in the language of Scripture, and not of Scripture alone, *the imperfect action* is not unfrequently put for *the perfect*—the beginning for the accomplishment. It is thus that we are sometimes said to be "*saved*" by having our salvation *begun*. So too we are sometimes called "just" and "justified," when no more is intended by the expressions than that we are *put into a way to become just and justified.*

The other remark connected with this is, that, at this period, all nations were under the Roman dominion—all, at least, who were objects of any consideration with the persons addressed.

The preaching of the Gospel at Rome therefore may be considered in the light of preaching to all the Gentile nations, inasmuch as Rome was the head and representative of the Gentile world. Taking this view, in connection with the preceding, the circumstance that Rome had received the Gospel, may be considered as the fulfilment of the prophecy—as the work of universal conversion commenced, although not perfected. And this, by the way, will account for St. Luke's closing his history of the Acts precisely at the period when St. Paul arrives at the seat of empire, and opens his commission there; all the preceding narrative having been a display of the progressive course of the Gospel scheme, directed from the Jews to the devout Gentiles, from the devout Gentiles to the heathen converts, and traced up to this eventful period, when the whole heathen world was preached to in Rome its capital and representative.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION.

Ver. 14—20.

But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in

Judæa flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

Of all the clauses of the prophecy, this is perhaps the most striking. In another Evangelist the meaning is more expressly given thus, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies[b]." In other words, the Christians were to wait, until they had seen the Roman standard pollute the holy city, and found themselves encompassed by armies, and their escape to all appearance precluded, before escape was to be attempted. Here was a trial worthy of the faith of the primitive Church, and it was worthily obeyed. Jerusalem was encompassed by the troops of Cestus Gallius. Finding himself too

[b] Luke xxi. 20.

weak however to storm the city, he withdrew his forces; and in the interim which followed between this and the arrival of Titus, an opportunity was given to the Christians to escape, which could not humanly-speaking have been foreseen. They fled in haste to Pella, and suffered no harm during the dreadful scene which followed—not a hair of any head was hurt.

THE FIGURATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE CHANGE FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW THEOCRACY.

Ver. 21—27.

And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

The last sign which was to precede the establishment of the new theocracy, was the destruc-

tion of the holy city, and especially of its temple. The mention of this accordingly is followed by a description, which, agreeably to the interpretation of the old prophetic language, may be explained of the change of dispensation now to be finally and completely accomplished.

Lest however the early Christians, swayed by long rooted prejudices, should conceive that Christ's reign so established was to take place by his presence in the flesh once more amongst them, he first warns them against this misconception, by repeating his prediction concerning false Christs, and adding, " and then if any man shall say to you, *Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there;* believe him not." Many impostors, he tells them, would take advantage of the erroneous notion, and delude many, (as actually was the case;) but that Christ in this new kingdom of God was not to be " *here,*" or " *there.*" There was to be no local temple or kingdom. The hour was come, when neither to the mountain in Samaria, nor yet to Jerusalem, should be attached the presence of God; but the true worshippers were to worship Him in spirit and in truth. So " when he was asked by the Pharisees, when the

kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say *lo, here*, or *lo, there*, for the kingdom of God is *within you*[c]." He was indeed, according to the promise made to his disciples, to "come unto them;" and, in remembrance of this, the apostle who survived the signs of his fixed residence with his Church exclaims, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" but He was to come as God manifested by the Spirit—to be within "the Church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all[d]."

After what has been already said of the import and character of the prophetic figures here employed, it will be unnecessary to point out their fitness to the present occasion. There is one, however, against which an exception may be taken—the image of the angels sent to gather "the elect from the four corners of the heavens." But even this is not inapplicable to the event which took place on the establishment of Christ's Church, when God by his "angels," or ministers, selected and called various nations into his kingdom. The term angel is by the inspired writers applied

[c] Luke xvii. 20, 21. [d] Ephes. i. 23.

to those so sent, and the term elect, to those so called. St. John, for instance, uses the term "angel" in the sense of bishops[e]: and the term "elect" became even more familiar in Christian phrase. For the frequent use of this latter term there was indeed a further reason. God's former kingdom consisted of persons *selected* out of the world; set apart, and made His peculiar people. In speaking therefore of the new theocracy—the spiritual Church—the persons composing it were fitly designated by a title, which pointed out their claim to be the successors of the Jewish Church, in all the privileges of God's elect.

At the same time, the sending forth of God's angels to gather together his elect from the four winds of heaven, carries with it, to us at least, so much more of the character of a description of the day of judgment, that many interpret it also of that day; some apply it wholly in this manner. The mention of this difference of opinion naturally leads us to the next point proposed for consideration, namely,

[e] Rev. ii. and iii.

SUPPOSING PARTS OF THE PROPHETIC LANGUAGE USED BY CHRIST TO BELONG PROPERLY TO A DESCRIPTION OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, WHETHER SUCH PARTS CAN BE RECONCILED WITH THE DECLARATION OF CHRIST CONCERNING THE PERIOD OF THE WHOLE PROPHECY'S FULFILMENT.

On this question turns the main difficulty, the only difficulty indeed which the prophecy involves. If the language of the prophecy, according to the interpretation proposed, seems to be fully explained in reference to the change of dispensation which was consummated and legally sealed by the abolition of the temple-service, then the whole did take place within the period prescribed. But if any portions of it suggest, and seem designed to suggest, a more awful scene which is yet to be realized, how are we to reconcile the apparent inconsistency? While He who delivered the prophecy preached Truth as the characteristic of his doctrine, and has confirmed, by all that can give confirmation to the candid, his own pretensions to be "the truth," the difficulty can occasion no faltering of faith; no

doubt, in that sense of doubting; but it may well occasion doubt, as to the way in which the meaning of the prophecy is to be received.

Let us see then. Our Lord was professedly prophesying of the change of dispensation, the pledge of which was the removal of the temple-service; for out of a remark on the goodly appearance of the temple, the whole discourse took its rise, and is clearly connected throughout with it. In the course of the prophecy he has adopted a figurative language from the Old-Testament-prophets, consisting of a picture of the heavenly system deranged, and the angels of God busy with the execution of His high commands. These images are evidently hieroglyphical, and we so interpret them in the old Scriptures, and why not in the new? But then he has introduced, it may be said, images, which connected with other parts of prophecy, we consider to be images of the day of judgment. And why not consider them in this place as hieroglyphic figures? as mere symbols for expressing that great change, which, by its fulfilment, would confirm our faith in the next great change—the change from the kingdom on earth, to the kingdom in heaven? Is it not very

likely that our Lord adopted these awful images, that he chose, as his hieroglyphics, the figures proper to the final scene of the world, in order that we may so connect the two, as to be confirmed in our hopes or our fears of the one, whenever we read of the accomplishment of the other?

Such is the view, into which we are led by looking merely at the narrative of St. Mark. But if we turn to St. Matthew, we shall observe, that his Gospel contains two distinct prophecies—the one in the twenty-fourth the other in the twenty-fifth chapter. The former of these corresponds to the prophecy recorded by St. Mark; the latter relates to the course of events, subsequent to the establishment of God's kingdom, inclusive of that last great day, when the Son of man shall come to judgment. In St. Luke, as in St. Mark, the record appears to be confined to that change of God's kingdom, of which the consummation and seal was the destruction of Jerusalem.

It is true, that there are some few coincidences of expression between the twenty-fifth chapter also of St. Matthew's Gospel and this fifteenth of

St. Mark; and the like coincidence may be observed between the two chapters of St. Matthew. But agreeably to the supposed intent of divine wisdom, in connecting the two events by certain common images, so that the first coming of Christ when fulfilled, might be a pledge of Christ's last coming; the more striking from the association of ideas;—agreeably to this, some parallel expressions may be expected as well between St. Mark's account, and the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, as between the two successive chapters of St. Matthew. Just such a coincidence will be observed.

That the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew commences a new series of prophetic visions, *beginning from the establishment of the Gospel kingdom*, marked as that event was by the sign of the overthrow of the Jewish polity, is suggested by the form of expression used by the Evangelist. "*Then*," writes he, "shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins," &c. that is, the kingdom of heaven having been established, and the overthrow of God's former earthly kingdom, the last sign being accomplished, *then*, such and such shall be the condition of the latter Church; until

the Church, the present kingdom of heaven itself, gives way to a future state, the end and consummation of all God's probationary dispensations.

Observe therefore the way in which the narrative proceeds from the one prophetic view to the other; and you will discover a further fitness in the two being stated together, and connected by common forms of expression. In the prophecy of that terrible scene, in which the Jewish polity was to be dissolved, the temple and the holy city sacked and levelled, and its inhabitants massacred, or driven houseless through a conquered land, it was needful to give the Christian Church the fullest assurance of security. On no occasion is the term "elect" more forcibly applied to them. Christ had called them his "little flock," alluding to the parable of the "good shepherd who would lay down his life for the sheep[f];" he had told them, "Fear not," for it was the Father's good pleasure to give them "the kingdom." But it was requisite to repeat, and to make these expressions more definite. Even the miseries of Jerusalem were to be shortened for the new

[f] John x.

" elects' sake;" and, although they should be dispersed, although many who were intended for the increase of the little flock, were not of the original fold, from the four quarters of the world he promises to gather in subjects for his kingdom, sheep for his fold—to elect a new Israel of God.

All these assurances were requisite; but might they not have led to the visionary prospect of a state of glory, rather than one of trial? Might not the Church have hoped for an immediate millenium; especially as such was, in fact, the view which long habit had given them as Jews of their Messiah's reign? The prophecy of the condition of the Church after the destruction of Jerusalem—after its sign of permanent establishment—is conveyed, in a way most strikingly calculated to prevent this delusion. " *Then* shall the kingdom of heaven be likened"—and the comparison made is to " the wise and foolish virgins;" and this again is followed up by a similar parable of " the servants and the talents."

Both these parables were evidently intended to warn the Church, which had required and received strong assurance of support as God's " elect," that *of the very elect there should be a further sepa-*

ration, and that those only who were on the watch would be finally blessed. In both parables, those to whom a difference of allotment is made are marked as members of the Church, or the "elect." In the parable of the virgins, they are the bridegroom's chosen friends, an image with which the disciples were, by this time, quite familiar. In the parable of the talents, the same truth was conveyed, by the circumstance, that all who had the trust committed to them were the Lord's *servants*—the very title which the apostles, and especially St. Paul, afterwards applied to themselves, in reference to those many forms of instruction in which their Master had represented them under this image. St. Paul styles himself in his Epistle to the Romans, "Paul, *a servant* of Jesus Christ." St. Peter in his second Epistle, "Simon Peter, *a servant* of Jesus Christ." Of all his followers Christ spoke, when he told Pilate, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would *my servants* fight[g];" and of all, when he promised, "If any man *serve* me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also *my servant* be[h]."

[g] John xviii. 36. [h] John xii. 26.

The time is also fixed to the period which was to elapse between the ascension of Christ, and his re-appearance to judge the world. In the parable of the virgins, it is represented by the interval that is between the bridegroom's absence and return to celebrate the feast—the season of the Church's finished probation and completed joy. In the parable of the talents, it is marked by the similar temporary absence of the Lord who was to return and take account of his servants.

That St. Mark, in his obvious care to abridge and be concise, should have omitted the latter prediction, will not appear so strange, if we consider, that he wrote for a Church composed very much of heathen converts, and therefore less likely to require warning against the strong association which was felt by the Jewish converts, between the Messiah's kingdom and a state of immediate glory and happiness. The same motive might have influenced St. Luke. St. Matthew, on the other hand, was writing for those who had been converted from the centre of Judaism, and whose numbers were receiving additions continually from the same source. It

is not the only common omission of St. Mark and St. Luke which may be accounted for from this circumstance of difference between their original readers, and those for whose use St. Matthew's Gospel was first composed.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHRIST ANOINTED FOR HIS BURIAL.

Ver. 3—9.

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? for it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

WHEN Saul was marked out by God for the holy kingdom of Israel, "Samuel took a vial of

oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance[a]?" Like to this in import was the action of the woman here recorded. Christ's death and burial formed the stage, which immediately led to that spiritual kingdom, over which he alone was to be Lord and Christ[b] for ever. Concerning the near approach of this kingdom, he had discoursed so continually of late with his disciples, that their minds were full of the subject, and their attention quickened to the excitement of any hint like this, which from its obvious connection with the divine appointments under the Jewish theocracy, bore no obscure reference to the event.

But who was the woman, who was made the agent in this transaction? Was it from a divine impulse that, like the prophet of old, she came to anoint one greater than Saul, to be captain over the Lord's inheritance? Or, did she merely intend a mark of respect to Jesus, and on this account draw on herself the commendation recorded, and the promise which is here fulfilled, that "wherever the Gospel shall be preached in

[a] 1 Samuel x. 1. [b] i. e. Anointed.

all the earth, this, that this woman hath done, shall be told in memorial of her?

St. Matthew's, St. Luke's, and St. John's Gospels all contain similar accounts of our Lord's being anointed by a woman, and his vindicating her conduct in so doing[c]. Nevertheless, it has been supposed, from some disagreement or apparent disagreement in the four narratives, that three different incidents have been placed in record. How far this is likely to be the case, it will be worth our while to inquire.

It will, I think, appear from that inquiry, that there were two anointings, which took place in the same house, and were performed by the same person, but at very different periods of our Lord's ministry. Both took place at Bethany, and in the house of Simon the leper, and the woman in both cases was Mary the sister of Lazarus; but her first act was performed early in Christ's ministry, and soon after her conversion; the last, a short time before the crucifixion.

In the first place, then, St. Matthew's account so exactly accords with this of St. Mark, that all are agreed in identifying the event intended by

[c] Matt. xxvi. 6. Luke vii. 37. John xii. 1.

these two. Again, St. Luke's story agrees in many remarkable particulars with the other two. He relates, for instance, that the event took place in the house of one Simon, and at Bethany; and that it called forth an expression of approbation from our Lord; and these are the main points which characterize the narrative in the former two. But then, according to St. Luke, it must have taken place two years before the period to which it is assigned in the narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and also in that of St. John; and one circumstance is added, which would at least make it inconsistent with St. John's statement—that the woman was a notorious sinner, and that our Saviour, on this occasion, pronounced the forgiveness of her sins. Lastly, when we examine St. John's account, there appears to be an agreement as to time and other circumstances with St. Matthew and St. Mark; but, in common with St. Luke, he differs from both these Evangelists, in stating that the woman anointed the feet of Jesus, whereas the other two say that the ointment was poured on his head. This however cannot be insisted on as an irreconcilable disagreement; because, while the main

purpose of the woman's action might have been fulfilled in pouring the oil on the head of Jesus, it may have flowed over his body, and, like Aaron's of old, descended to the skirts of his garments[d]. Or, she may, through diffidence, have begun with his feet, which, from the oblique posture in which he reclined at his meal, would be most accessible. Even St. Matthew and St. Mark, who speak of the head being anointed, report our Lord's words to have been, "she hath anointed my *body*." From St. John too we learn, beyond the statement of the others, that this woman was Mary the sister of Lazarus, and that it was Judas Iscariot who expressed discontent at the use of the ointment; whereas in the other Evangelists, the names of the woman and of the disciple are suppressed. For this variation there might be the same good reason, which has been suggested for the omission of the raising of Lazarus from the dead by the first three Evangelists, and the minute record of it subsequently by St. John. As long as Lazarus lived, and the Jews continued a nation, and there was consequently danger to be apprehended from

[d] Psalm cxxxiii. 2.

their malice; so long it might have been prudent to suppress the names of persons, the mention of whom was most offensive to them. With the same view that induced St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke to omit the account of Lazarus's resurrection, lest perhaps he might become an object of persecution to the Jews, they might have concealed the sister's name in the record of an occurrence which took place at a feast where the dead man restored to life was present. Some similar motive of prudence might have suggested also the suppression of the traitor's name for a time, in connection with this transaction.

St. John's account then may so far be considered as the same with that of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and differing from them only in certain specifications. But many commentators[e] have nevertheless contended, that it was a distinct event which he relates, on the following grounds. I. That the incident recorded by St. John is said to have taken place six days before the passover; whereas that recorded by St. Matthew and St. Mark appears to have happened only two. II.

[e] Lightfoot, Whitby, and Macknight. See Mant's Bible, John xii. 3.

That in St. John's narrative the scene is laid in the house of Lazarus; while according to St. Matthew and St. Mark it took place in the house of Simon the leper.

Merely glancing at the first of these objections, one can hardly refrain from suspecting that it must be founded on some mistake. So improbable does it seem, that two events so very similar and so strongly marked by our Lord, and noticed as singular by all, should have occurred within four days of each other. To notice nothing else in this resemblance—how strange it seems, that the reproof of the Lord to the observation made on the first occasion, should not have prevented the renewal of a similar observation on the second. But in truth, the narrative of St. John does not state, or even imply, that the event he records took place six days before the Passover. All that can be inferred from it is, that it must have taken place *some time within that period;* and this exactly corresponds with the statements of St. Matthew and St. Mark. St. John relates, that Christ *came to Bethany* six days before the Passover, and this incident is mentioned as one of those which occurred whilst he was there.

Nor has the second objection any more foundation. For St. John's account certainly is not that the feast was in the house of Lazarus, but only that Lazarus was "one of them that sat at the table with him," and that Lazarus's sisters were performing a part, which it is nothing strange they should have performed in the house of a relation, a friend, or a neighbour. Why indeed should the Evangelist think it necessary to state that Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Jesus, if he understood that Lazarus was the person who entertained him. Nay more; it is not indeed expressly said by St. John that Simon the leper was the master of the house and the entertainer; but there is one very remarkable incidental notice, which really looks like an intimation of it. Judas Iscariot (the disciple, according to St. John, who found fault with the waste of the ointment) is described as the *son of Simon*. Why should this latter circumstance be here introduced? Judas is no where else called Simon's son; and the title of Iscariot that is elsewhere used to distinguish him from the other Judas, is here also employed by St. John. Why should he now call him not only Judas *Iscariot*, but

Judas Iscariot *the son of Simon?* It does certainly look as if this Simon the leper were the father of Judas Iscariot; and that St. John was writing under the impression that his readers were aware of the transaction having taken place in the house of Simon[f].

That St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. John, then, relate the same event seems to be nearly certain.

[f] I am aware that the words on which this last argument rests, although found in the authorized text of the New Testament, have had their genuineness doubted. I will say more; the authority of the MSS. is rather against their being genuine. But as there are some words which have crept into numerous MSS. which we at once pronounce to be glosses carelessly mixed with the text by transcribers, from the likelihood that such words would form a very natural marginal note; so when an expression is more likely to have been dropped than inserted, we should allow its proper weight to this circumstance. Iscariot was the usual and only familiar appendage to Judas's name. A transcriber, not perceiving the ground of the addition "Simon's son," might accordingly have omitted it, from mistaking it for a gloss interpretation; or from overlooking what he did not expect to find. In short, the words are so much more likely to have been omitted than inserted, that the reading is probably genuine; although the decision to which we might come on a bare comparative estimate of the MSS. be different.

But that contained in St. Luke's Gospel cannot be the same. If it were allowable to take so great a liberty with his arrangement of facts, as to place at the close of our Lord's ministry an incident which he places in the earlier part; still, the fact that at that time the woman was a notorious sinner, can never be reconciled with the character of Mary at the period assigned to the event by St. Matthew St. Mark and St. John; and to make these conform in point of date with St. Luke, would be to destroy the force of our Lord's remark on the occurrence, " she hath done it for my burial," or, as it is expressed more pointedly in St. John, " she hath *kept* this for my burial." And yet St. Luke, like the other three, relates that the event took place in the house of Simon the leper; and adds circumstances, bearing in every respect so close a resemblance, as to force upon us a suggestion of at least some connection between the two occurrences.

And some connection is not really unlikely or inexplicable. What if the woman, who two years before anointed the Saviour's feet, and wept in the act of doing it until her tears are

said to have washed them, was Mary the sister of Lazarus; at that time a notorious and newly-penitent sinner, but from that moment for ever as remarkable for her repentance, her docility, and her faith, as she had been for her sins? Hence perhaps we find *her* afterwards sitting at the feet of Jesus, whilst her sister Martha, who might have had less reason to feel deeply the value of any word that fell from him; who, in short, loved less because less had been forgiven her, "was cumbered about much serving," and careful about other matters[g]. With this too agrees the fact, that St. John, earlier in his narrative and before he has given his account of the second anointing, speaks of Mary as one who *had* anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair[h]. In this view of the matter too, we may understand how it came to pass, that she of all others should have ventured to perform an act indicating an advance of faith beyond any which had as yet been manifested. She, it would seem, understood that she anointed Christ for a kingdom, on which he was to enter through the grave. It was a deliberate premeditated act. Against

[g] Luke x. 39. [h] John xi. 2.

the day of his burying "she *had kept*" the symbol of her confession of Jesus as the Christ; being thus perhaps the first of all his disciples who believed in his death and reign conjointly. And this explains to us the singular honour our Lord conferred on her, in appointing that what she had done should form a part of the Gospel history, wherever it should be published. As Peter's confession was rewarded with the promise that his name should be associated with the foundation of the Church; so this further confession of Mary procured for her the promise of the fulfilment of which we are witnesses. "Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

CHRIST BETRAYED TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS.

Ver. 1, 2. 10, 11. 43—52.

After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.——And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when

they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.——And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. And they laid their hands on him, and took him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. And they all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Immediately after the occurrence which was last considered—the anointing of Jesus by the woman—Judas Iscariot offered his services to the chief priests, in bringing about the design they had formed of putting Jesus to death. On account of the resolution of Judas having been formed, as it would seem, immediately after the

Lord's anointing by Mary, some have imputed his treachery to revenge for the open rebuke which his avarice had on that occasion received. He was, it will be remembered, the chief person who cavilled at the waste of the ointment; and he did so, we are told, "because he was a thief, and kept the bag." Others have taken this hint of his love of money, and combining it with the fact that he received and bargained for thirty pieces of silver on betraying his Master, have supposed avarice to have been the motive. Both are plausible. And yet, when we come to reflect, the scriptural account will scarcely warrant either supposition. In commending or vindicating Mary, Christ implied indeed disapprobation of the view, which others, in common with Judas, had taken of her conduct, but his words conveyed no severity of reproof. It was no rebuke which can be compared with such as all his disciples at least had been accustomed to receive, and from the authority with which the Master spoke, to receive as no degradation. Witness that reply to the suggestion made in their zeal for his honour, "Ye know not what manner of spirit you are of;" and more especially that to Peter, "Get

thee behind me, Satan." How often did he upbraid them all for want of faith; and continue to be regarded by all, as one removed beyond the sphere of their resentment—as one whose rebuke was not to be received like the insult of their fellows.

Still less satisfactory is the attempt to account for the traitor's deed, by supposing him to have been induced by the paltry consideration of thirty pieces of silver. For, if he held the bag, and, as it is intimated, was dishonest in his office, he must have been too conscious of sacrificing an established source of gain, to have made the bargain. It is impossible too that Christ's miracles could have failed to convince him of the reality of his character as the Messiah; and to have excited in him hopes of greater gain, when he assumed his reign. The great mass of the Jews indeed were unbelievers; but their case was wholly different. To them Christ's miracles had been sparingly displayed; to them he had spoken in parables only, "that seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they might hear and not understand and be converted." From them he concealed, by the most positive injunc-

to swine. The free gift of God's assistance is only withheld from man until he is *capable of using* it; not, as we may vainly suppose, until he has *deserved* it; and the joys and privileges of heaven hereafter may, for all we know, be in this way the reward of righteousness here.

But, if neither love of money, nor the impulse of resentment, will account for Judas's betrayal of his Master, to what shall we attribute it? Was he then an involuntary agent of Satan? This would be inconsistent with what we know of God's dealings, and absolutely irreconcilable with the responsibility which is charged on him by the Saviour for his conduct, "The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom he goeth; it were better for that man that he never had been born." No—Judas's scheme developes itself only at the closing scene of it. He knew, and must have known, that his Master was the Messiah; but in common with his fellow-apostles, he believed his destined reign to be a temporal one. In common with them, he could not comprehend how he was to be put to death, and yet to reign and abide for ever in this new theocracy. What then was the

circumstance which caused so great a difference between the other apostles and him? It was this—they could not understand how all their conflicting hopes and opinions were to be reconciled; but they followed their Master still in humble faith—even like Abraham proceeding to the place of sacrifice with his child—and leaving it to God to explain and reconcile, what to them was irreconcileable, incomprehensible. Of them all, Peter seems to have been the most sorely tempted. Our Lord's especial intercession for him, and his attempt to rescue his Master in the garden of Gethsemane, proves this. But it was Judas only whose faith failed him. He was impatient of the delay and suspense under which he laboured; thought that it was surely impossible, notwithstanding all Christ's assurances, that he should be put to death; and roused, no doubt, by the Saviour's pointed remark on the action of Mary, "she hath beforehand anointed my body for my burial," he went out and resolved to put the matter to the test. Secure of doing no personal harm to Jesus, he might (consistently with his other views) have supposed, that when the Messiah had extricated himself by a miracle from

his enemies, his excessive zeal in hastening the crisis would be overlooked, or even applauded. Once resigned to temptation, the very means of grace might have become to him ruinous, as wholesome food is often found injurious to the diseased stomach. The very warning which our Lord at the last supper conveyed to him, "What thou doest, do quickly," might have been welcomed as a sanction of his intended negociation with the chief priests, which, then at least, he was sure was not unknown to Jesus. Such must have been his impression. For could he, after being aware that Jesus was privy to his scheme, have approached him in the garden of Gethsemane with, "Hail, Master," and a kiss of friendship and respect, unless he were under a delusion of this sort? Judas's case reminds us of the prophet Balaam. God forbade him to go to Balak; but, eager to be promoted to very great honour, he was discontented under the prohibition, and sought to have it removed. So "God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them."—"And God's anger was kindled, because he went[1]." Like the prophet, Judas

[1] Numbers xxii. 20.

blindly mistook for a sanction the words which were addressed to his presumptuous obstinacy, "What thou doest, do quickly."

But if we would see the whole character of the transaction plainly developed, we must follow the traitor beyond the scene of his treachery, and observe his behaviour, when, to his dismay, he saw Jesus submit to be condemned, and led away for execution. Where was the miracle on which he had confidently reckoned? The truth then flashed across him; and the Saviour's declaration which he had so often heard and marvelled at, now gave light to scriptural prophecies which he had hitherto perversely kept out of sight, or misinterpreted. "I have betrayed *the innocent blood*," he exclaimed, in allusion to that prophecy which came most home to him[k]. The thirty pieces of silver he cast away—how could these have tempted him?—and went and hanged himself.

THE LAST SUPPER.

Ver. 12—25.

And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we

[k] Psalm xciv. 21.

go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

As the providing the ass on which Christ's entry was made into Jerusalem was the subject

of a miracle; so the furnishing a room for the Lord's last supper, seems from the narrative to have been connected with some revelation to the master of the guest chamber. Whatever further ends were accomplished by this exercise of miraculous agency at that time and on that occasion, it must doubtless have served the purpose of awakening the attention of the disciples to expect some extraordinary scene at the feast—a feast honoured, even like that of Cana in Galilee, by a divine interposition in its arrangement and provision.

This feast did accordingly furnish two remarkable occurrences for the Gospel record. The first, which was our Lord's prophetic declaration concerning Judas's betraying him, has been already noticed in the review of the traitor's conduct. The other and the more important circumstance, was the institution of the Eucharist. In order then to read the narrative of this institution, so as fully to understand its import, we must, in the first place, keep in mind the character of the festival at which Christ delivered the bread to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body; and the cup of wine, likewise saying, Drink

ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament.

Our Saviour must have eaten this supper the evening previous to that on which the paschal lambs were slain. For, on looking at the narrative, we shall observe, that he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane afterwards, and early the next morning brought before Pilate. That day he was crucified: and his body was taken down in the afternoon, so as not to be hanging during the solemn season of killing the paschal sacrifices, with which the hour of his death must have almost exactly coincided. The last supper was not therefore a part of the general celebration of the Jewish Passover, but must be considered as an anticipation of it.

However strange the liberty of anticipating this great feast may have seemed to his disciples; there can be little doubt, that they understood that they were eating the Passover; and must have been sufficiently accustomed to the licence which from time to time he claimed as "the Son of man," and the proofs by which he shewed his authority, to have felt any scruple. He had told them expressly that it was the Passover for which

the guest chamber of him to whom they were sent was to be used; and if, as is strongly indicated, the preparation was connected with some miraculous revelation to the master of the guest chamber, the miracle might have been intended as the especial pledge that he was authorized to anticipate the great festival. The last supper, therefore, must be considered, *as far as regards the guests who were present*, as the celebration of the Jewish Passover.

Now this festival was commemorative of the deliverance of God's people from Egypt; and it was also typical of that greater deliverance which Christ was to accomplish. This we know from sundry passages which allude to this event in the writings of the apostles. Christ is there called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world[l]," "our Passover[m]," and the like. Considering the feast then in this point of view, our Lord's words, connected with that view, naturally imply that he was *really* what the meat and drink *typified*—the meat, his body, the wine, his blood. He tells the apostles, "This is my body," meaning that it was his body which the eatables

[l] Revelations xiii. 8. [m] 1 Cor. v. 7.

had always represented; the original Lamb itself being not the reality, but a shadow of that —"This is my blood," i. e. it is my blood which the wine has all along represented; the blood sprinkled on the door posts in Egypt, and hitherto commemorated by this feast, being itself but the shadow, and not the substance. Accordingly he had, on a previous occasion, told his apostles, "My flesh is meat indeed," (i. e. my flesh is the reality typified by the meat of the sacrifice,) and "my blood is drink indeed," (i. e. my blood is the reality typified by the blood of the victim [n].)

This typical character of the Passover is the first point to be considered. The next is, that in every sacrifice there was an accompanying feast —a custom indeed not peculiar to the Jewish rites, but existing throughout the world, wherever sacrifice was practised. The festival of the Passover was exactly of this character—a feast upon a sacrifice. When Christ therefore commanded that a feast corresponding to it should

[n] John vi. 55. The use of the word ἀληθῶς in the original expresses this meaning more clearly than the "indeed" which corresponds to it in the English version.

be continued, the Christian festival must be considered as the feast upon the sacrifice of Christ. As oft as we renew the ceremony therefore, we repeat the feast on the sacrifice, although the sacrifice itself be not repeated; but once made for the sins of the whole world.

Lastly, putting these two views together, our Christian rite will appear to combine two distinct objects. First, it expresses by a significative action the Christian sacrifice, and is a symbolical record of it. For this purpose the bread is *broken*, and the wine *poured out;* these actions being significant of Christ's bodily sufferings, and the shedding of his blood. Again, the rite is observed as a feast, perpetually renewed, upon the one sacrifice so recorded: and hence it is, that we not only break the bread, but *eat it;* we not only pour out the wine, but *drink it.*

Not indeed that even this last mentioned portion of the ceremony is without an emblematic character. Our Lord probably intended that the visible and sensible reception of the elements within us, and their conversion into our bodily substance, should be a sign to remind us of that our union with him which is described as the

indwelling of his Spirit, and of Himself within our hearts[o]. Accordingly he on one occasion told his disciples that he was "the life[p];" and on another, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no *life in you*[q]." So too, in allusion to this, we are taught by the apostle, that "the Spirit is life because of righteousness[r]."

This last remark leads me to notice also our Lord's declaration, "Verily I say unto you, that I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Jesus never partook afterwards of the Passover, never, that we know of, celebrated the Eucharist with his disciples. It is said indeed, that after his resurrection, "He was known of them in breaking of bread[s]," but this can hardly be so applied. Rather say that the Holy Spirit of Christ is in his Church, which is, his new body, even as his fleshy frame was, when this declaration was made[t]. When, therefore, after the descent of the Holy Ghost—when, at this day, a Christian congregation partakes of the new

[o] Rom. viii. 9, 10. [p] John xiv. 6. [q] John vi. 53. [r] Rom. viii. 10. [s] Luke xxiv. 35. [t] Eph. i. 23. ii. 22. Col. i. 24.

Passover, Christ is in the midst of them, they are his body and members in particular. He is then as truly present, and as truly a partaker in the ceremony of " drinking the fruit of the vine," as when his divine nature was united only with the man Christ Jesus. In this sense he fulfilled his declaration to the apostles, and in this sense continues, in every age of the Church, to drink the fruit of the vine in his own kingdom, the kingdom of God on earth. He said that he would drink it *new;* because it was thenceforth to assume a new character and efficacy. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, God's former appointments—to make all things new.

CHRIST IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

Ver. 26—42.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any

wise. Likewise also said they all. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

From the last supper our Lord, we observe, proceeds with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and in his way thither he foretells their general desertion of him, and appoints Galilee as the place where they were to meet him after that mysterious event—his rising from

the dead. Out of this prophetic declaration arose the strong protest, of St. Peter especially, and of the others, that, rather than forsake him, they would die with him—a protest which the remainder of the narrative shews to have been as weakly maintained in the case of St. Peter as of the rest. This inconsistency will be more intelligible, if we consider the remarkable scene which now took place in the garden of Gethsemane, and which Peter, James, and John were now especially selected to witness. For, considering the long and steady devotion of the apostles to Christ, their evident personal attachment to him, as well as their faith in him, (now put beyond a doubt it would seem by the accumulated evidence of miracles continued up to that very day,) it requires certainly more than the common failing of human nature observable in mankind to account for the denial of him by one, and the denial of him implied by the conduct of all, within a few hours after so sincere and hearty an avowal of their constancy, and so solemn a warning of the trial to which it would be exposed.

Our Lord's own part in the scene which is

described to have taken place at Gethsemane, is perhaps the most mysterious, solemn, and affecting picture in his history. On the cross itself, and amidst the sufferings and insults of the hour of atonement, he exhibits the placid composure of triumph. Death was there indeed embittered by much that is mysterious, awful, and overpowering, and by infinitely more, we feel, than man can appreciate or comprehend; but his words, his actions, his whole behaviour, bespeak the calm anticipation of a mind, either not susceptible of the terrors inspired by his situation, or previously steeled against them by a struggle with human weakness, as incalculably great, as the scene itself was both naturally and mysteriously dreadful. For the record of that effort to subdue human nature to an acquiescence so complete as was exhibited at the crucifixion, we must perhaps turn to the description of what occurred in the garden of Gethsemane. It can hardly be doubted, that during the whole of it we are to recognise the final renewal of the temptation which commenced with his retirement into the wilderness before his ministry began. When that was ended, we are expressly told, that the

devil departed from him "*for a season*[s];" and that this was one and the great period of his return, not only the circumstances of the scene indicate, but, taken in connection with these, the many allusions made now by Christ to the especial exertions of the tempter. Before his arrival at Gethsemane, and after the Passover had been kept, he reminded his apostles, that they were the persons "who had continued with him in his *temptations;*" as if arming them to abide the last which they were to share with him as his friends and coadjutors, and against which, in that capacity more especially, he had taught them to pray, "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one." A little after their arrival at the scene of trial[t], he warned them all now to use the appointed prayer, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." All were admonished of Satan's desire to have them that he may sift them as wheat; and Peter knew that an extraordinary trial awaited him, from the intercession which the Lord told him that he had made especially for him[u]. In unison with all these hints too is the expression which fell from

[s] Luke iv. 13. [t] Luke xxii. 39. [u] Luke xxii. 31.

him at the close of the whole scene, "This is your hour, and *the power of darkness.*"

Nor do the circumstances of the event less forcibly suggest this: "He began to be sore amazed and exceeding sorrowful," is a description which accords with no other moment of his life. The words too, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—what an agony of soul they convey! Scarcely less affecting is his request to Peter, James, and John, to "tarry with Him;" as if even their weak presence was a comfort to him in that tremendous hour of trial. "And he took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Then saith he unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me."

This view of our great Example has been the more dwelt on here, because, in our reverential contemplation of Christ's human perfections, we are apt to overlook the important fact, that they were not the result even of his original human nature left to itself, but as it was influenced and perfected by the same holy comfort which he has imparted to all his disciples. "He was made in

all things like unto us, sin only excepted." The tears which fell on the grave of Lazarus flowed from the same source, out of which, in unregenerate man, springs weak repining or sullen discontent; his unwearied industry in "doing good" was but that, which the miser or the ambitious man employs to other ends; and the calm fortitude with which he endured insult, pain, and death, was formed out of the very same qualities, which, ungoverned and misdirected, brought the guilty robber to a cross by his side. The materials were all human and our own, the workmanship alone divine. And is the Lord's arm shortened? will not the same God that worketh in us also, enable us like him perfectly to will and to do of his good pleasure, if only the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus? It is true, indeed, that to us the Holy Spirit is given *by measure;* still that measure is a measure of grace sufficient for us. It is true, that it is given in a way which renders not the Christian as his Lord both God and man; but, still, the moulding of human nature into the highest perfection of which it is capable is one promised result of that union; and it is enough

for the disciple, that he be, in this respect, as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.

CHRIST BEFORE THE JEWISH SANHEDRIM.

Ver. 53—65.

And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet

him, and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

At this period of the Jewish history the great council of the nation, before whom our Lord was now brought, had not the power of passing sentence of death. The decision of capital causes was in Judæa, as in the other provinces of the empire, reserved for the Roman tribunal. But still, the Sanhedrim was long permitted to exercise a limited jurisdiction over all Jews, whether by birth or proselytism, and abroad, it would seem, as well as at home[x]. It was confined to "questions of their law," and on such a question our Lord was now brought before them.

For the origin of the charge made against him we must refer to the second chapter of St. John[y], where it is recorded of him, that, according to his usual method of binging instruction on present scenes and occurrences, whilst he was teaching in the temple, he spoke of his body as a temple

[x] See Acts, chap. ix. where Saul is described as applying to the high priest for "letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, *he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem*."

[y] Ver. 19.

which should be destroyed, and raised again by his own power, within the third day. The words therefore laid to his charge might have been, and probably were, literally such as he had used. But the falsehood of the evidence lay in the misapplication of them. Jesus had spoken of the *temple of his body*, as the Evangelist remarks; the witnesses gave in the evidence as if he meant the Jewish *temple of stone*. Hence it was, no doubt, that their evidence could not be made to agree, because each false witness would probably enough add something more which might go to prove the criminal meaning of those words—that they were so spoken, namely, as to apply to the holy building at Jerusalem. Even so, we Christians—and it is a serious and fearful consideration—may be quoting the words of divine truth, the very language of our Lord, and yet be guilty of false evidence. When, like the Jewish witnesses, we first frame a position, and then seek for texts of Scripture to support it, and apply these only in reference to the view predetermined on; are we not doing even the same? Nay, did not Satan himself do the like? The arguments by which he sought to shake our Lord's constancy were texts

of Scripture; then, now, in every period, not only "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness," but to those too, who being "called" neglect their calling, and by wisdom know not God[r].

It was probably indeed owing to the conflicting testimony of the witnesses, that our Lord's real application of the expression was elicited, and his accusers led to change their ground of inquiry, and to ask him, "Art thou the Christ?" In calling his body the temple, (they meant to ask,) did he imply that God resided therein and attached his manifestation thereto, as in that edifice strictly so called? If so, he must assert himself to be the Immanuel, the Christ, whom the prophets declared should be even such an one, "God with us." Such would seem to be the turn which the inquiry took; and accordingly when in answer to the question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" he replied in the affirmative, they charged him with direct blasphemy. As forming designs against the temple, and endangering the city, he was, they thought, amenable to their tribunal, and might also be made chargeable before

[r] 1 Cor. i. 21—24.

the Roman authorities. But in asserting that he was God, a new source of accusation more palpably the object of prosecution is presented to them. Had they possessed the power of life and death, they would forthwith have condemned him to be stoned, but this power they had not. Great and horrible as his crime seemed in their eyes, it involved only a question of their law, and how were they to render his case one of capital offence, and still cognizable by the Roman magistrate?

The Messiah had been represented in their prophecies as their God, and their King; and as a temporal king they doubtless expected him. The means therefore of bringing Christ before the Roman governor's tribunal were obvious; and indeed such an occasion had been again and again sought for. Whilst amongst themselves therefore they dwelt on the blasphemy implied by his pretending to be the Messiah, that person being considered as the Immanuel; we shall find them before Pilate imputing treason to him, as implied in the other character of the Messiah, his being a king. He claimed to be the God of the Jews—and they had a law, and by that law he was worthy of death. He claimed to be the king of

the Jews—and no loyal Roman, "no friend to Cæsar," would let him escape. This was their case against him.

It is remarkable that the Jews should thus have rejected Jesus, evidently for the want of the signs of *temporal* royalty; and yet have made his accusation before Pilate rest on his pretension to it. In short they accused him of doing that, which had he done, they would have welcomed him, risen in his behalf, and died for him. They not only "laid to his charge things that he knew not[z];" but a crime, the doing of which was all that was wanting to have secured him their favour and obedience.

On closing these observations, one should be added on the peculiar form of oath in use among the Jews, to which we find Christ here submitting. In all other communities the person swearing has been justly considered as the only one who is entitled to make the appeal to God which is made in that solemn ceremony. For an oath is a religious ceremony, in which the juror places himself as it were at the tribunal of God, and by a solemn rite, demands there a punishment or acquittal,

[z] Psalm xxxv. 11.

independent of the sentence of the mortal judge. Hence its universal adoption by the civil magistrate, in order to supply that inward scrutiny which mere human proceedings cannot effect. But, as it is an appeal from human to divine judgment, it is obvious that the juror alone can consistently make it. How comes it otherwise in the Jewish civil code? The reason is this; God was their king, and their chief civil governor on earth was his vicegerent. Hence, in that state alone, the civil magistrate could at once transfer the person arraigned from human to divine judgment; from the court in which he presided as God's vicegerent, to that of God himself.

That Christ should submit to an oath, even so imposed, is only in accordance with his payment of the tribute money to the temple; and indeed with his general habit of conformity to the Jewish law. His kingdom was not yet come.

PETER'S DENIAL OF CHRIST.

Ver. 66—72.

And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou

also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilæan, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

Supposing the scene in the garden of Gethsemane to have been a scene of especial temptation, in which Satan was exerting his mysterious power against the Lord and his apostles, we readily understand the failure of their constancy, and more particularly the denial of Peter, even of Peter, who certainly wanted neither faith nor courage. It was Peter who first confessed him to be the Christ, and was on that account honourably distinguished by his Master. It was Peter who braved the risk of interfering in his behalf when he was apprehended. And yet, of all his followers, it was Peter who denied him.

In truth, Peter's temptation seems, as far as we

may judge from sundry incidental hints, to have been really the same as that of Judas; and to have arisen out of a view common to all, that Christ's kingdom was to be temporal. Hence no doubt at a very early period Christ so severely rebuked him, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" words which, however severe they might have seemed at the time, were proved by the after-trial of the apostle to be a merciful warning,—the more severe the more merciful, because, the more likely to sink deep into his mind, and to prepare him for this his last and worst scene of temptation. He to the last had looked forward, it would seem, to some miraculous interposition in behalf of Jesus; and the absence of this at once destroying all that he made sure of seeing realized, was the point at which he was most likely to fail. Accordingly he drew his sword in the garden of Gethsemane—an act far less audacious but apparently of the same character as Judas's betrayal. But Peter had faith enough to benefit by our Saviour's prayer for him. "Put up thy sword," said Jesus; and the apostle was for the time recalled to himself. But when his Master stood before the high priest, was condemned, and

yet no heavenly rescue appeared—when he evidently shewed by his manner that he meant to submit to death—the apostle's mind was wrought to the highest pitch of dismay. He could not comprehend the event. Against faith he for the moment desponded, and in that bewildered state of mind denied his Master. But, unlike Judas, he was still a little child of that same Lord who had prayed for him, and still alive to the last effectual aid which he gave him. Christ turned and looked upon him. Oh that we all could fancy ourselves in the many temptations of life, turning to meet that look! As when the Lord stretched out his hand, and at the same moment snatched Peter from the waves of Genesareth into which he was sinking, and rebuked him for his want of faith[y]; so he now at once saved him, and reproved him by a look. It was the last, and it was decisive. Henceforth he was as patient in faith as he was bold in hope, and fulfilled exactly the command of Christ, "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren[z]." He it was who first preached Jesus to the Jews; and it is remarkable, that the sum of his discourse was the

[y] Matt. xiv. 31. [z] Luke xxii. 32.

very point which seems to have constituted his own former difficulty and trial—the doctrine on which his own faith was so near being shipwrecked. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ[z]."

[z] Acts ii. 36.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And

Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Prætorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a scull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and

saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a spunge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem. And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And

Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

PILATE'S BEHAVIOUR.

WHAT share had Pilate in the guilt of Christ's crucifixion? This need be only so far made a subject of inquiry as to ascertain, whether there be any ground in Scripture for asserting that he was the involuntary and unconscious perpetrator of so great a crime. Certainly, it would have been at variance with God's course of providence that it should have been so. From time to time, the history of His Church and of the world furnishes instances of persons, who, through their very crimes, were made the means of bringing about some of the designs of Providence, and who are even said to be raised up by Him for these purposes. Such, among many, was the king of Babylon, who led the Israelites into captivity. But in no instance does the free agency

of the instrument appear to have received any extraordinary impulse or check, either from the immediate interposition of God, or from the circumstances under which the event was accomplished. In every case, our natural conclusion is, that God chose the instrument *because He foresaw* the suitableness of his character, not that he made his instrument of that character in accommodation to the event to be accomplished by it. In Pilate's case especially, this will be very evident, if we attend to one or two circumstances in the combined narrative of the four Evangelists.

First then, his wife received a divine warning through a dream, which she communicated to her husband. Without pausing to inquire how it came to pass that a Gentile should receive a revelation, and of this particular kind too, from the true God; it is certain that such was the fact; and that this occurred, not only in this present instance, but in several others on inspired record. To mention no more—there is the case of Pharaoh, who received, even like Pilate's wife, divine communications in dreams. Probably, in all these cases, the persons so visited must have

had the dream confirmed by a further miraculous sign; else it would have tended, one would think, to encourage a superstitious interpretation of ordinary dreams, already too prevalent in the heathen world. Besides which, the person visited by a dream would (if exempt from such superstition) have naturally neglected to act upon its suggestions, and would have been justified in so doing. By appending some miraculous sign then to these occasional dreams, God might have given an instructive hint to the Gentile, by which he would see at once the distinction between those ordinary dreams to which he had once given credence, and a dream accompanied by its appropriate test. The silence of the historian respecting this sign would be no proof that it was not given; for, if it were the long-established and invariable rule respecting inspired dreams, the mention of it would, on that very account, be the more likely to be omitted. But, however this might be, Pilate's wife certainly was warned by God in a dream, and, through her, Pilate himself.

Secondly, there is much reason to believe, that Pilate must have made sufficient inquiry into

Christ's character and alleged crime, not only to have ascertained that he was "a good and just man," but that he was a very marvellous and mysterious character. He evidently wished to save his life; and, when he at length yielded to the wishes of the chief priests, he performed a ceremony which, whether it be considered Jewish or heathen, symbolically expressed his being no party to the transaction. The question he put to Christ too, "Art thou a king?" connected with the inscription on the cross, and his appeal to the Jews whether they would crucify their king, all really indicate some information obtained by Pilate respecting the Jewish hope of a Messiah; and not only obtained, but perhaps credited. That he should make some inquiry, the lowest view of the administration of justice seems to imply; and that from the accusers themselves he should receive much information, if only by way of explaining what could have induced the criminal to pretend to be a king, is almost certain. If added to this knowledge, his own less prejudiced mind should have led him to suspect that the Jews had failed to recognize their Messiah; how greatly would this feeling be increased by the presence of

the Lord Jesus—his dignified composure—his firmness in asserting his kingdom—and his unaccountable resignation to death, as if death itself could not interfere with its establishment, "Knowest thou not," said the astonished Roman, "that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee[a]?" There was enough in short about the prisoner's case to have awakened a candid mind to further investigation: there would have been enough furnished by that investigation, to have made one, possessed of the candour to inquire, a disciple; and Pilate might have become the apostle instead of the murderer of the Saviour. But there was in his case the same or a similar blindness with that which darkened the view of the Jews; and which still, under infinite varieties, darkens the view of every man, until he submits a docile and humble mind to the inquiry about the truth. If he believed, even like Judas, that a prophetic king of all the earth stood before him; still it was easier for him to put the question to the test, by delivering him to the Jews for them to attempt to crucify him, and providing a salve for himself, by an indolent effort to save him, and

[a] John xix. 10.

a formal washing of his hands; than by patient and humble inquiry, in the face of opposition and calumny, to expose himself to the charge of being no friend to Cæsar, and endanger his fortune and his very life. But that he had some doubts at least whether the Jews would be able to accomplish the desired crucifixion, even after his permission was given for it to take place, seems to be implied in his expression of surprise when told that Jesus was dead. When Joseph of Arimathæa came to demand of him the body, (of course implying that the body was lifeless,) he was astonished, "he marvelled if he were already dead;" nor would he believe, until he had called the centurion on duty, and questioned him whether he was surely dead—whether it had taken place so long as to leave no doubt of it[b]. Did he at that moment call to mind our Lord's hint, given at the time when his mind was painfully wavering, as it would seem, between truth and error, "My kingdom is not of this world; were my kingdom of this world, then would my servants fight for me[c]?" When we read these words, bearing in mind all that is besides related of

[b] *Εἰ πάλαι ἀπέθανεν.* [c] John xviii. 36.

the part Pilate took in the transaction, it does really look as if the Lord perceived the thoughts of his heart, and had stretched out his arm to save him, but had been rejected. Pilate was not sure that Christ was the king expected, and he wanted those qualities which would have enabled him to make himself sure. But still he inscribed on his cross the title "the King of the Jews;" which could not have been from joining in the insults of the Jews, for they disliked it, and he refused to erase it when they requested him. He appealed to them too in behalf of Jesus, by calling him their king; which he would hardly have done, if he had desired to save his life merely on the ground of his being a deluded but innocent man. But wavering, and irresolute, and desirous only of escaping risk, when these efforts proved unavailing, he formally washed his hands of the guilt, if guilt it should prove; and having thus, as he supposed, steered the prudent course, he waited the result. So much doubt however remained, it would seem, on his mind, as to make him refuse credence to any but the centurion, that the crucified man was dead.

The death of Jesus was a result, which, no doubt,

'eft him satisfied (as it did the major part of the Jewish nation) that his surmises respecting his claim to be the promised king of the Jews were unfounded; and he was even less likely than before to pay any attention to the preaching of Christ's followers, or to the account of the resurrection. His test had been applied, and his mind was probably henceforth made up. He did not indeed continue very much longer procurator of Judæa, but died a few years after, by his own hand, at Vienne in Gaul, whither he had been banished by the emperor for his mal-administration.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROPHECY AT THE CRUCIFIXION.

The prophetic marks of the Messiah given in the ancient Scriptures are of a character which precluded the attempt to fulfil them all in any but the Messiah himself. They admit of being divided into two classes, to both of which this remark is applicable; and there are but few, if any, which may not be assigned to one or the other of these classes.

First are those points, the fulfilment of which, supposed not *one* but *a series of miracles*, as, for

example, the opening the eyes of the blind, and other healing powers.

To the other class belong those points, the fulfilment of which depended on *unforeseen accident,* or on the *agency of others*—on the agency of those, I mean, who could not be suspected of collusion; or on accident, which could not be foreseen or reckoned on by an impostor. Of this description are the earthly genealogy of the Messiah, and his birth place. Of this kind also was the circumstance that he should be prized by his enemies at just thirty pieces of silver, neither more nor less. Most of these prophetic marks were in themselves trifling; and very reasonably so; because, as they were to make no part of the Messiah's agency, they required to be important in nothing but their exact fulfilment. And being exactly fulfilled, their very want of importance made them to be the more striking, because the less likely to be an object of ambition to the person whose cause they supported. Whenever it so happened, however, that one of these trivial prophetic marks did depend on our Lord's agency, then, we may observe, that he gives it an additional difficulty

and importance, by making its accomplishment the result of a miracle; that it might not be mistaken for a mere human contrivance, or a foreseen accident. Thus his riding into Jerusalem on an ass was remarked to have been connected with the exercise of divine interposition.

Most of the prophetic characteristics of the Messiah, however, which belong to this class—which depended namely for their fulfilment on accident—arose, as we might expect, out of the events of that period, when he had resigned himself to his enemies, and when they, and not he, were the contrivers of what befel him. The narrative of the crucifixion, accordingly, abounds with these. Besides the coincidence with the several passages of prophecy which point to him as destined to be an object of scorn, and as one to be esteemed stricken of God, (all which is so apparent in the treatment which he experienced at the hands of his enemies,) we may observe certain specific and extraordinary fulfilments. Such was the provision that his garment should not be parted, as was usual, but cast lots for—that no bone of him should be broken—that

(strange contrariety) he should make his grave with the wicked, and yet be with the rich in his death; a prophecy which was fulfilled by his being crucified between two thieves, and afterwards buried honourably in a rich man's new sepulchre.

The immense number of prophetic marks, the fulfilment of which was crowded into this brief but awful period, were clearly calculated to give the scene of atonement itself a similar character to the ministerial agency of our Lord which had preceded it. Throughout his ministry, he had exhibited a conformity to the description of prophecy, in every way which could excite attentive inquiry and faith in the humble minded; and in his death the lesson was completed by a series of hints, which doubtless wrought conviction on many besides the penitent thief and the centurion.

To aid the effect of ancient prophecy fulfilled, he had himself added some predictions, for the confirmation of his disciples' faith on this their most trying emergency. As, for instance, that he should be delivered over to the Gentiles, instead of falling a victim, as was far more likely,

to the immediate violence of his countrymen—that he should be crucified, instead of being stoned, as had been so often attempted. To the disciples, therefore, the remembrance of the scene must have been an illumination of their views, and a fixing of their faith; so great as soon to rouse them from the painful and mournful reflections attending it. It may be observed, that in all the accounts of the crucifixion, with whatever variety they are given, while, on the one hand, its close coincidence with prophecy is carefully alluded to by the writers, as the prominent suggestion of their minds, no expression of horror, or sympathy, or mourning, mixes with the record. Fools, and slow of heart, even to the period of the crucifixion, to believe all that the prophets had written, all that Christ himself had predicted—prone as they had been to be sorrowful, and even to chide with him at every mention of his death—no sooner was that event over, and the Holy Ghost had called up the past to their remembrance, and taught them its full import, than the neglected meaning of so many speaking images in the Lord's life and death predominated over every other impression. As

witnesses and historians of his life, they henceforth were eager to describe and give effect to those very features of his ministry, which they had failed to interpret, and which now, from being so pointedly recorded, leave us in wonder at the dulness of any who could have been at a loss to comprehend them. In their account of Christ's sufferings, his mockery, and his death, *that it behoved him so to suffer*, is the impression which they most study to convey, because that which they had found the greatest difficulty in receiving.

CERTAIN MIRACULOUS SIGNS WHICH ATTENDED THE CRUCIFIXION.

Isaiah's prophetic account of the Messiah, that he was to be known by opening the eyes of the blind, and healing all manner of disease and infirmity, was verified in two ways. The account literally corresponded with the miracles which our Saviour performed in evidence of his divine mission. Again, those miracles, and of course the prophecies too, were expressive of the moral and religious effects of his ministry; which, by an easy metaphor, may be termed the removal

of *spiritual blindness*, of *spiritual infirmity*, and of *moral corruption*. The cure of the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the lepers, awakened the memory of the prophecies; the miraculous character of these cures gave assurance that they were the fulfilment of those prophecies; and, from time to time, a more important fulfilment was developed, by Christ's so alluding to the miracles, and the prophecies, as to give the one a metaphorical, the other a symbolical, import.

In like manner Joel's prophetic marks of the change from the old to the new theocracy[a], were expressed in language, whose import was doubtless metaphorical; for it was the accustomed language of prophecy, when employed about future revolutions, whether civil or religious. Still, as this far exceeded in importance all other revolutions, and as the necessity of discerning the signs of times was greater in this than in any preceding instance, attention was recalled to these prophetic marks also, by a literal and miraculous fulfilment of them. Before that great and terrible æra, whose commencement St. Peter declared to have been the descent of the Holy Ghost[b], the

[a] Joel ii. 30, 31. [b] Acts ii. 16.

sun was to be "turned into darkness," and the natural world thrown into disturbance. The principal meaning of the prophecy was, of course, contained in the change itself from the old to the new kingdom; but to rouse attention to the prophecy as then fulfilling, and to the change as nigh, at the crucifixion the sun was literally darkened, and the earth quaked. As in the case of Christ's fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecies, it was further of importance that those signs should be *miraculous;* in order to assure those who observed in them a coincidence with the prophecy of Joel, that to these signs, or to the events to which they were appended, must the prophecy apply. The affixing a miraculous character to the fulfilment of a prophecy which might otherwise accord with more events than one, makes that prophecy equivalent to those to which one and only one event corresponds. Providence delights in variety, as well in the scheme of grace as in the course of nature; and it is beautiful to contemplate the diversity of means in both by which the same end has been accomplished. It continually enforces on us a warning against views of fate, necessity, and that eternal law, by

speculating on which, atheists satisfy themselves of the existence of a supposed controlling principle, while they deny the attributes and personality of a God. Neither an eclipse of the sun, nor an earthquake, are in themselves miraculous. That the sun should be so darkened as to give no more light at noon than it does at midnight, is rare, but involves no necessary miracle; for this actually did take place in Portugal less than two centuries ago. But that the sun should be eclipsed at all, unless when the moon is *new*, is quite as contrary to the established laws of the universe, as that water should burn or fire wet us. It requires a very moderate acquaintance with astronomy to be aware of this. Now the eclipse at the crucifixion was a total eclipse, and it took place at *the full of the moon*. This we are certain of; because the celebration of the Passover was regulated by the full moon, and never could take place at any other part of the month. Thus the eclipse was the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy; and it was a miraculous fulfilment of it, in order to excite attention to it, and to assure the spectators that the prophecy's *literal* fulfilment was now intended.

Meanwhile those who, accustomed to the figurative language of prophecy, considered these expressions as the hieroglyphic description of a mighty change in God's kingdom, would have their attention awakened to the prophecy, and be led to expect that change to be at hand, and to be connected with the miracle they witnessed. And if they had been followers and hearers of the crucified Messiah, that scene must have awakened further and more solemn thoughts. His disciples must have remembered, that, in allusion to the holy Shechinah, he used to call himself "the light of the world[c]." They must have seen in that noontide night, a still more awful and mysterious darkness stealing over all the land of Israel, in that God's glory was withdrawn. To their eye the temple of God manifested in the flesh was destroyed, the light of Israel was quenched.

Besides the eclipse which alone is noticed by St. Mark and St. Luke, St. Matthew makes mention of another sign, an earthquake[d]. These were the two great features in the prophetic picture of "wonders in heaven above, and signs in the

[c] John viii. 12. ix. 5. xii. 46. [d] Chap. xxvii. 51.

earth beneath;" and to the earthquake therefore we naturally assign the same character as to the eclipse. But as an earthquake has nothing in it miraculous, it may be asked, where was the miracle in this instance? where that evidence of the absence of natural causes, which might stand in lieu of such a specification as would render this and no other earthquake a fulfilment of the prophecy? To this question it may be answered, that, making as it did a *part* of the prophetic picture, it was not necessary that more than one feature in that picture should be so marked by miracle. For, if the spectator was assured that the eclipse was the fulfilment of the prophecy; the addition of the earthquake, or of any other physical disturbance in heaven and earth, would of themselves be even signs of confirmation, because increasing the likeness of the event to the scene described in the prophecy. And it is indeed very possible, that, besides the eclipse and the earthquake, other signs in heaven and earth might have been given, so as to render the prophetic picture more complete; although they are not on the Scripture record. At the same time, it does so happen, that even to the earthquake there was a miracle

appended. Amongst the effects of the earthquake which are recorded, one is, that the stones of many sepulchres were rolled away. Now, after the resurrection, out of these sepulchres many dead bodies, having received new life, walked and visited their friends at Jerusalem [d]. By this circumstance then of the dead walking out of the sepulchres so opened, the earthquake itself was declared to be a divine interposition—even as when the angel rolled the stone from our Lord's own sepulchre. The miraculous darkness indeed could be known to be miraculous only to those who understood enough about eclipses to be sure that one could not naturally take place at the full of the moon: but the release of the dead bodies from their graves by an earthquake, was a miraculous mark set on the earthquake which all could understand. He who ran might read that this was the prophetic sign of the acceptable year of the Lord, and that it was God proclaiming liberty to the captives of the grave.

The last sign which remains to be noticed is the rending of the vail of the temple. As this vail enclosed the holy of holies, and separated it from

[d] Matt. xxvii. 52.

the parts of the sacred building to which the people had access, it was of course guarded with sufficient care to make it secure against any who should venture to violate it. Like the sepulchre after the seal had been set on it and the watch appointed, it could only have been disturbed by super-human agency. But why should the miracles of the crucifixion take this particular turn? Remember what purpose this vail served. It separated that most sacred recess, which the high priest alone might enter, from the rest of the temple. It formed the first mark of distinction which was observed in the use of the temple with respect to the several gradations of those who worshipped therein. In these gradations consisted a feature of the Jewish Church which was not to be preserved in that which was to succeed it. Among the characteristics of the Christian dispensation as contrasted with the Jewish, no one is more prominent than its *unity* or *uniformity*. Until Christ, the privileges of the covenant between God and his chosen, were dispersed in *unequal* degrees to the several classes of those so favoured. The mere believer in the one true God was considered as of course pos-

sessing a claim superior to the idolater; but much inferior to the proselyte to Judaism. There was a distinction between the portions of the temple to which these two kinds of strangers were admitted; and from their place there, the one was called the proselyte of the gate, the other the proselyte of righteousness. Again, the lineal descendant of Abraham considered himself heir to promises which set him above the most perfect proselyte. Nor did the gradations end here. From the first institution of the Jewish Church the principle of inequality was laid in the division of the Israelites into the class of Levites, and into those who were not like them to partake of certain priestly privileges. The very Levites again were marked by a very strong line of separation, and the family of Aaron reserved for the high priesthood, and its attendant privileges. They alone entered within the holy of holies, within that vail, the first mark of those distinctions which appear thus to have run throughout the whole constitution of the Jewish Church. The rending of the vail therefore was a plain symbol that these partition walls were no longer to divide God's people into separate classes,

enjoying distinction and degrees of grace and privilege. It told figuratively but emphatically of that change which was afterwards preached by the apostle Paul, when he insisted on "one Lord, one baptism, one faith;" and when struggling against the prejudices of his countrymen, he besought them to preserve "the *unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace[e]." In the dispensation of the Spirit, all was one and uniform. Once a Christian, whether before Jew, or proselyte, or idolater, the churchman was to claim and to enjoy the highest degrees of grace. In the new temple there was to be no family like Aaron's, no tribe like Levi's, no nation like the Israelites. The partition walls between outward and inner court, between the temple and its holy of holies, were all broken down; and the idolater who came in at the eleventh hour, was as free of the new temple, as the converted son of Abraham, whose fathers had served there from the first dawn and early morning of the Church.

This be it remembered is no mere human interpretation of the rending of the vail of the temple. Its import was indeed so obvious, that

[e] Ephesians iv. 3, 5.

human reason alone would probably put on it such an explanation. But St. Paul's comment on the change of dispensation, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, contains the materials of all that has been here remarked. A portion therefore of the ninth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews will be a proper conclusion to these remarks.

Chap. ix. 1—8. x. 16—22.

Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread, which is called The Sanctuary: and, after the second vail, the tabernacle, which is called The Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat: of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God: but into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost this signifying, That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.——This is the covenant that I will make

with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

CHRIST'S EJACULATION ON THE CROSS.

The words uttered by our Saviour on the cross are from the beginning of the twenty-second Psalm. Of all the Scriptures the Psalms were apparently most used by our Lord; and it is probable by that class of hearers with whom he was most conversant. The Psalms, as has been before remarked, held in the Jewish literature that place, which national songs and works of mere amusement occupy in the literature of all other nations. They were probably familiar to the lowest class of Jews—to those whose knowledge of the other Scriptures was scanty. Nor is it unlikely that in the sanction of many of the

Psalms, (the remark applies still more to the Song of Solomon,) the Holy Spirit provided for that cultivation of mind, which might enable the Jews at large to be competent hearers of the Messiah. The Jews had no literature besides sacred; and it would seem, that by these portions of Scripture, the minds of all were stored with a certain class of images, out of which the Christian instruction was conveyed when the Messiah came.

Our purpose at present however is not with our Saviour's use of the language and images of the Psalms for the end here supposed, but with his application of David's complaint, under some great distress, to his own case on the cross. Literally the words imply a desertion by the Almighty of the complainant, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" nor can there be any reason for attempting to force on them a less obvious exposition, and to make them merely expressive of great distress[f]. Indeed, there is, if we consider, much reason against adopting this view. Christ throughout his min-

[f] See Bishop Porteus's Lectures on St. Matthew, Lecture xxii.

istry is found maintaining his divine nature. He is also found speaking of God as "his God;" e. g. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God[g]." Here in like manner he addresses Him most emphatically, "My God, my God," as if implying, that some divine assistance, which was not afforded, might have saved him from that hour. In short, Christ sometimes speaks as if God were speaking, on other occasions his language is that of a man.

As to the general object obtained by this contrariety, it seems pretty obvious on reflection. Had he, (making use of the miraculous evidence employed by him,) had he always spoken as God, he might have awakened in his hearers and in us that natural propensity to ascribe locality to the Deity, which, even as it is, and after so many ages of Christianity, is by no means subdued in the world. His person, his visible and corporeal substance, and much more the nobler qualities of his human mind, might have been conceived to be a part of the Divine nature, and man himself, to a certain extent, the literal image and counterpart of his Creator. It does certainly seem, as if

[g] John xx. 17.

the continual assertions of the Son of God's human nature were made with a view to guard us against this misapprehension; which indeed we are now the less competent to consider in its most perilous aspect, because that caution has generally preserved us from it.

On the other hand, had Christ only delivered the good tidings of God, speaking of Him all the while as his God as well as ours, he might have appeared to us only like any other inspired messenger of God. His character as the Immanuel; the union of the divine with the human nature which rendered the latter perfectly good and holy, and fitted it for its part in the great mystery of the redemption, all this would have been concealed under a vail. And all this we are sure it is requisite for us to have known, whatever parts of the wonderful scheme of grace may be hidden from us in this our stage of trial and earthly darkness.

But beyond this general purpose, which it is reasonable to attribute to the occasional declarations made by Christ of his human nature, it seems as if a specific object were gained by the ejaculation on the cross, "My God, my God,

why hast thou forsaken me?" The doctrine of the atonement wrought for us in that great hour is, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself[g]." What if the weakness or misguided piety of the Christian world had led them to contemplate the divine nature alone in this act presented to them on the cross? What if they had supposed God was suffering in Christ? These words at once silenced such a thought. The disciples knew from all the course of the Saviour's ministry that in Him God had been manifested. They were at the same time continually assured, as well by their own reason, as by Christ's language, that the manhood of Christ made no part of the divine nature. It was this that seems to have perplexed Philip, "Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." "Philip," our Lord replied, "he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father[h]." But here was a scene, which stood alone in its import, and its greatness; a scene in which the other passages of Christ's career scarcely afforded ground for a clear and satisfactory view; a scene, in which, however awful the spectacle exhibited, more than could possibly

[g] 2 Cor. v. 19. [h] John xiv. 8, 9.

meet the human eye might be reasonably surmised to exist amongst the secrets which the Father had reserved within his own power or province. What, if under all this clouding of the mind, the Christian believer had thought that God was suffering? His error might indeed have been corrected by the subsequent provision of inspiration; but it was surely more effectually prevented by mingling the caution with the record of the event itself. And that the caution was really necessary has been proved by the result. For although Christians would now reject the idea as impious, and revolting, and absurd; yet in the early Church, and with the words of our Lord accessible to them, there was a sect who, from this very tenet, were called Patripassions, or believers in the sufferings of God the Father.

CONVERSION OF THE CENTURION.

St. Matthew and St. Mark agree in stating the language of the centurion to have been, "Truly this man was the Son of God." According to St. Luke it was, "Certainly this was a righteous man[1]," or one unjustly condemned. Really

[1] Luke xxiii. 47.

there is no difference between the statements, save in the mode of expression; for the conviction implied by the two sentences is the same. Christ had been condemned, and was hanging on the cross, because he had claimed to be the Son of God. This claim he openly maintained to the last. If then he was "a righteous man," and unjustly condemned, this assertion was true; and if this assertion was true, he was unjustly condemned. So that the two expressions were, in reference to the conviction and faith wrought on the centurion, equivalent, and meant the same thing. It was only the difference between saying of one condemned on a certain charge, that he is innocent, and saying in express terms that he did not commit such and such a crime, or that he did fulfil such and such a duty, for the neglect of which he had been condemned. In this very language Pilate's wife sent her warning to her husband, in consequence of a dream which had divinely informed her of the justice of his wonderful prisoner's cause. "Have thou nothing to do with that *just man*[k]."

That the centurion should make use of an

[k] Matt. xxvii. 19.

expression, "the Son of God," which implied a previous acquaintance with the Jewish faith, if not an acceptance of it, leads us to conclude certainly that, although a Roman and heathen by birth, he must at this time have been a partial proselyte. Those who had renounced idolatry, but still refused to submit to the observance of the ceremonial of the Jews, and to the badge of circumcision, were called proselytes of the gate, in contradistinction to the converts to Judaism, or the proselytes of righteousness. They are sometimes described too as Gentiles, with the addition of some epithet, to distinguish them from their idolatrous brethren; as "devout," "fearing God[1]." In every part of the world, where Jews were settled—and where had they not found their way?—some of this description of persons probably existed. In the seat of empire, perhaps, and especially in the army, the instances would be less frequent than elsewhere, because of the national pride which formed a check to the renunciation of the Roman religion, and of the policy which had included the standards of the army and the preliminaries for battle in the re-

[1] Acts x. 2. xvii. 4, 17. xiii. 26.

ligious view of the soldier. Still, even among the soldiers, instances were to be found. For, it can hardly be doubted that the centurion, whose faith our Saviour during his ministry rewarded by the miraculous cure of his servant, and extolled as superior to the faith of any native Israelites, was a devout Gentile[m]. Cornelius too, the first fruits of the Gentile world, was, we are told, a centurion.

At the same time, that the case was likely to have been less frequent among the Roman soldiery than amongst any other class of Gentiles must be admitted; and that out of the force employed by the empire at this time in Palestine, three of the centurions should not have been worshippers of the imperial eagle, but persons "fearing" the God of Israel, is very surprising. That three should not only have professed this apostacy from their national faith, and have become partially united with the Jews, but in opposition to a tide of Jewish prejudice also, should have appeared among those whom our Lord favoured with miracles, convinced, and, in one instance, at least, by express revelation commanded to be baptized, is so strange

[m] See Luke vii. 2.

as to startle us. We cannot help asking the question, "Is it possible that there were at that time three Roman centurions in Judæa, so similarly circumstanced in points so unlikely for any one? And although we may answer, that possible it certainly is; yet the improbability is so great as to lead us to conjecture, that these three were after all one and the same person. This is not indeed intimated in the several accounts, yet there is nothing in those accounts which contradicts the supposition, or which is in the slightest degree inconsistent with it. On the contrary, it is much more agreeable to the usual progressive acquirement of faith to suppose, that the centurion, whose servant's cure is related by St. Luke, was at that time only a believer in Jehovah, and had faith in Christ as one of His commissioned messengers, on the strength of some miracle which he had witnessed, or had heard well attested—that still uncertain as to the exact character of this accredited messenger of Him whom he acknowledged to be the one true God, he with candour and attention observed the several signs exhibited in the scene of the atonement—and that by them being fully con-

vinced, he acknowledged his claim to be "the Immanuel," "the Christ," "the Son of God," promised to the Jews. Still viewing the promise, as it was most likely he should, through the false medium of Jewish prejudices, he must have conceived that this wonderful person, whose character and pretensions he had so far ascertained, was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. What in the Jew was wilful blindness, in the Gentile was error that originated with his source of knowledge, and even savoured of humility. He believed, if he so believed, even to his own exclusion from the benefits purchased by the Son of God. But when called on to be baptized—to lead the way through the vail, which in God's new temple had been rent, who so ready as the good centurion? who so likely to be chosen for this honourable mark of distinction? Selected to guard the cross of Christ, because, probably, he was known to favour the Jews, "to have loved their nation, and to have built them a synagogue;" he was accidentally placed in a situation which enabled him to witness, as a point of duty, all that occurred. He placed himself opposite to Jesus. He read

the superscription on the cross, and knew the penitent thief's assertion, that *he* died convinced of its truth; he saw the mysterious criminal reviled, and esteemed stricken of God; he felt the earth quake, and was conscious that the sun was turned into darkness; and he who had built a synagogue for the reading of the Jewish Scriptures, could scarcely have been ignorant that these were among the scriptural marks of the true Son of God. He saw too all these coincidences meeting in the case of one, whose demeanor and words corroborated the evidence of all these signs—who, if he had not raised one from the dead in his presence, had miraculously prevented his servant from dying. Conviction, under such circumstances, could have been prevented only by that prejudice and hardened state of heart, which characterised the majority of the spectators. While the enemies of Jesus saw in his last breath their triumph, and the confirmation of their views, the centurion's more just conclusion was, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

To some it is more pleasing to dwell on instances of conversion, in proportion as they bear

marks of being produced by a sudden and brief operation of grace on the heart. With these, the thief on the cross, and the centurion at the foot of it, are supposed to be the more striking instances of the efficacy of our Lord's miracles, and the more worthy specimens of conversion, because no gradual progress of faith is pointed out. But, if the foregoing remarks have any foundation, it is likely that the conversion of the centurion —of him whose faith surpassed any of the children of Israel—was the result of successive stages of evidence. In the case of the thief on the cross too, no notice is indeed taken of any passages in his previous history; and with the same hasty mode of inference it is concluded, that all his conviction was wrought on the cross. That he was once a sinner, a notorious violater of the laws of God and his country, his own confession on the cross proves; but it does not afford even a presumption that no interval had elapsed between his course of crime, and his hour of punishment. Like Mary, he might long have been acquainted with the friend of sinners; might have come forth from his robber haunts to listen to his lessons of salvation; might have

counted death itself gain in the pursuit of this instruction; nay, might have been more keenly searched out by the Jews, exposed to arrest, and finally brought to punishment through his attendance on Jesus. All this is not contrary to any thing on record; whereas to suppose a change of mind, from extreme vice to exalted piety and faith, the work of one hour, is. That the case was, in other respects, singular and unparalleled, may go far indeed to support the opposite opinion; but why make any unnecessary exception from the regular course of grace? The pardoned thief's case would still be singular and alone, if up to that moment his faith had been progressive, and was then only fully established; especially, if, as is probable, it then went beyond the extemporary faith of the apostles themselves, and embraced the doctrine, that Christ's *death* and *reign* were compatible and connected. And both in the case of the malefactor, and of the centurion, it can never be too strongly urged, that their faith, whether slow or sudden, was the result of evidence; without which, faith was never required, commended, or rewarded by Christ.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RESURRECTION.

ALTHOUGH each Evangelist's account of the resurrection is, by itself, clear and intelligible; yet the comparison of any two, suggests the need of such a thread to the narrative, as may reconcile apparent disagreement, and enable us to arrange the incidents in their proper order. The following summary exhibits that arrangement of the main events which is most probable, and best supported by a comparison of the several narratives.

DAY OF THE RESURRECTION.

The earthquake; the rolling away of the stone from the sepulchre by an angel; and the terror and flight of the guard. Matt. xxviii. 2—4.

Visit of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and other women to the sepulchre, for the purpose of embalming the body. Mark xvi. 1—5. Luke xxiv. 1—3. John xx. 1.

Mary Magdalene's report to Peter and John of the removal of the body. John xx. 2.

Vision of two angels to the women left by Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, directing them to go and tell the disciples that Jesus was risen. Matt. xxviii. 5—7. Mark xvi. 4—7. Luke xxiv. 4—8.

The report of these women to the apostles. Matt. xxviii. 8. Mark xvi. 8. Luke xxiv. 8, 10.

Visit of Peter and John to the sepulchre, in consequence of Mary Magdalene's report. Luke xxiv. 12. John xx. 3—10.

Appearance of the Lord to Mary Magdalene, who had returned with Peter and John to the sepulchre, and was left there by them. Mark xvi. 9—11. John xx. 11—18. (*First appearance.*)

Appearance of Jesus to the company of women, and his message to his disciples, appointing them to meet him in Galilee. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10. (*Second appearance.*)

Appearance to Peter. 1 Corinth. xv. 5. (*Third appearance.*)

Appearance to Cleopas and another disciple in their journey to Emmaus. Mark xvi. 12, 13. Luke xxiv. 13—36. (*Fourth appearance.*)

Appearance to the apostles assembled, Thomas being absent. Mark xvi. 14—18. Luke xxiv. 36—49. John xx. 19—25. 1 Corinth. xv. 5. (*Fifth appearance.*)

EIGHTH DAY AFTER THE RESURRECTION.

Appearance to the apostles assembled, Thomas being present. John xx. 24—29. (*Sixth appearance.*)

BETWEEN THE EIGHTH AND THE FORTIETH DAY FROM THE RESURRECTION.

Appearance at the sea of Tiberias. John xxi. 1—24. (*Seventh appearance*[a].)

Appearance on the mountain in Galilee. Matt. xxviii. 16—20. (*Eighth appearance.*)

Appearance to more than five hundred brethren at once. 1 Corinth. xv. 6. (*Ninth appearance.*)

Appearance to James. 1 Corinth. xv. 7. (*Tenth appearance.*)

FORTIETH DAY FROM THE RESURRECTION.

The Ascension. Mark xvi. 19. Luke xxiv. 50—52. Acts i. 3—11. 1 Corinth. xv. 7. (*Eleventh appearance.*)

[a] St. John's statement that this was "the *third* time that Jesus shewed himself to *his disciples*," means that it was the third time of his shewing himself to them *collectively*; the appearances which this Evangelist selected for record being chiefly those which took place while the disciples were in assembly. See chap. xx. 19, and 26.

Comparing this general view of the facts of the resurrection with St. Mark's account, the additional matter to be derived from the other Evangelists, and from St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, will be found to comprise many independent statements, which require to be considered together with St. Mark's history. Taking therefore the whole history of the resurrection as it stands arranged in the above brief abstract, I shall endeavour to point out the probable character and design of the several appearances of our Lord in the flesh after his death and burial.

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE.

Matt. xxviii. 1—10.

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;

and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Mark xvi. 1—11.

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here; behold the place were they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she

went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

Luke xxiv. 1—12.

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and, as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

John xx. 1—18.

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone

taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie; and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She

turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

It is expressly stated by St. Mark, that the first appearance of our Lord was made to Mary Magdalene. She was called Mary *Magdalene*, or "of Magdala," to distinguish her from others of that name; as, for instance, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary who anointed our Lord. By many indeed the two anointings of our Lord have been attributed to two different women; and she who performed the first has been identified with Mary Magdalene. But there is nothing in the Gospel narratives which suggests the view of their identity; and that it was probably Mary the sister of Lazarus, who, in each instance, anointed Jesus, has been already pointed out.

In St. Paul's enumeration of the several appearances of Christ, that to St. Peter[b] is placed

[b] 1 Corinth. xv. 5.

first. This however does not contradict St. Mark's statement; because it does not imply that St. Peter *saw him* first. And it may be added, that St. Paul placed St. Peter's name first, probably because he was the first of *the appointed witnesses* who saw the Lord, and it was partly with a view to include himself among these, that he mentioned the subject. This is very likely to have been the case.

To begin then with the appearance to Mary, considering it as the first which was made. There is one feature in the narrative which strikes us as very extraordinary. On Mary attempting to address Christ, whom she saw suddenly as she turned at the sound of her name, he tells her, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God."

West, in his excellent work on the Resurrection, very judiciously observes, that any attempt to explain this, by attributing it to some mystery in the divine nature of Christ, would only involve the question in increased perplexity. The solution which he offers however is not altogether

satisfactory. These are his own words: "I take Christ's forbidding Mary Magdalene to touch him, to have been meant as a signification of his intending to see her and his disciples again; just as in ordinary life, when one friend says to another, "Dont take leave of me, for I am not going yet," he means to let him know that he purposes to see him again before he sets out on his journey[c]." This is very ingenious, and in itself not unlikely. But then the Lord's words to Mary, if this had been his meaning, must have been, "I am not yet *going to ascend;*" instead of which he tells her, "I have not yet *ascended*[d]." The latter expression fixes the propriety of what she was intending to do to a period *after* his ascension, and corrects her mistake in doing it at *any time before*. Instead of allowing her to follow the first suggestion of her heart, he seems to remind her, that what she was thinking to do, he had appointed to be done after his ascension. He intimates, that she was to defer it until then; and, as it would seem, for the purpose of conveying the same hint to his other disciples, he bids her go and tell them, that he was about to

[c] West on the Resurrection. [d] οὔπω ἀναβέβηκα.

make his promise good, and ascend "to their Father, and his Father, and to their God, and his God,"—implying that it would be then time for them to do, what was not now to be done, only because he had not yet ascended.

But what was this act of affection or devotion which was so forbidden or deferred? The Evangelist merely states, that Mary was beginning to address the Lord, and that he told her not to touch him. For what end did she attempt to *touch him*, as the expression is? Some light is thrown on it, by the account of his appearance to the women in whose company Mary went first to the sepulchre. From a comparison of the several narratives, it would seem that Mary Magdalene, and other women with her, went very early in the morning to the sepulchre—that on finding the stone rolled away, Mary must have quitted her companions, and have flown with the story to Peter—and that Jesus must consequently have shewn himself separately, to her first, and afterwards to these other women. Now how did these other women behave when they saw the Lord? "They came and *held him by*

the feet, and worshipped him." What so likely as that Mary's attempt to *touch* him should have been precisely the same? She probably attempted to lay hold on his feet, and to worship him.

But then, it will be said, Christ did not forbid these other women to touch him, and why Mary? True, it is not said that he forbad them; it is even said that they did touch him, but the bare statement that they seized his feet and worshipped him, may be intended to express only an unfinished action—the attempt to do it. With this form of expression no one can be unacquainted. That Christ discouraged them, at least, is probable from his language to them. He at once dismissed them, with the injunction to bid his brethren meet him in Galilee; without any apparent sanction or approval of their prostration and adoration. At all events, the disturbed state of mind into which these women appear to have been thrown by the previous vision of angels, as well as by Christ's appearance, and which is marked by the words, "Fear not," rendered them unfit to receive the same lesson as Mary Magdalene, and made it requisite that Christ should assure

them of the reality of his bodily presence. This West himself has observed; "Mary Magdalene's grief (the only disorder of mind she then laboured under) for the supposed loss of her Master's body was soon dispersed, upon her hearing him call her by her name, and seeing him stand by her; she was immediately convinced that it was Christ, and testified her conviction by giving him the title of Rabboni, my Master. *She* wanted not (and therefore there was no need of giving her) any further proofs; but, satisfied with what she had seen and heard, she went to the disciples, and told them she had seen the Lord; and that he had said such and such things to her. But terror, the most untractable of all passions when excessive, had seized upon the other Mary and Salome; a terror, which, had it proceeded from the unexpected and supernatural appearance of an angel, was more likely to be confirmed than removed by the like appearance of Christ, had he not proceeded gently with them, and, by his gracious words and demeanor, given them encouragement and permission to familiarize themselves with him by degrees, and take in their own way what proof they thought proper to re-

move their fears or doubts; and convince them that their affectionate and beloved Master was in reality restored to them again from the grave[f]."

Still, all this, it may be said, leaves the matter ultimately unexplained. Supposing we are ready to allow that Mary did, like the other women, attempt to worship Christ, and that this was the attempt to "touch him" which he interrupted; still, why should he interrupt her? why should he give as a reason for interrupting her, "I have *not yet* ascended to my Father?" Even before his death, were there not instances of suppliants prostrating themselves in their petitions to him? why must Mary wait until he was ascended?

The Evangelist who records the prohibition furnishes an explanation in the sixteenth chapter of his Gospel. St. John is there recording our Lord's declarations and injunctions to his disciples, in reference to his decease. Jesus, having foretold them of his disappearance from amongst them, and their consequent sorrow, proceeds to speak of his return to them as their Comforter. "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy *no man taketh from you.*"

[f] West on the Resurrection, sect. xiv.

Now that this promise related to his coming by his Holy Spirit, in whose effects they were to recognize him, is plain; for "the joy" of his return in the flesh was soon "taken away," nor did he, so, abide with his disciples "for ever." To this promise then of revisiting his disciples and brethren, is immediately annexed a direction respecting some change which was to take place in the form of their petitions to God, from that time forth for ever. "And in that day," adds he, "ye shall ask *me* nothing. Verily, verily I say unto you, that whatsoever ye shall ask *the Father in my name*, he shall give it you." That is, as he explains it[g], I shall not need to offer prayers in your stead. He was himself to become the proper object of the Christian's prayers, as their glorified Saviour, their unmanifested God. Instead of asking him to pray for them, they were themselves to address the Father in his name. He was to go *to the Father*.

Now all this was certainly intended to take place under that change of dispensation and manifestation, which was to commence with the descent of the Holy Ghost. From that period

[g] See John xvi. 28, compared with ver. 26.

accordingly we find prayers which have been preserved on inspired record addressed to the Lord Jesus; whilst those of the uninspired Church, which succeeded the apostolic age, are offered up either to Christ, or through his name. Mary, however, seems to have mistaken his appearance in the flesh, which was the pledge of his resurrection, for his promised coming, and forthwith attempted to fulfil his command, and to pray to him. It was only then to correct her misapprehension about his coming, and not to mark any mysterious impropriety in her attempt, that he interrupted her. He did not mean to object to what she was doing, but to correct a misapprehension of which it was a sign. She thought that his coming as the Comforter was now fulfilled; and he reminds her, that, according to his prophecy, his ascension was first to take place.

What confirms this view, is his marked allusion to the language which he used when he commanded his disciples to pray to him. "I leave the world," said he on that occasion, "and go to the Father. In that day ye shall ask the Father in my name." His words to Mary were, "I have not yet ascended to the Father; I

ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God."

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO TWO DISCIPLES ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS.

(*Fourth appearance.*)

Mark xvi. 12, 13.

After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue; neither believed they them.

Luke xxiv. 13—35.

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain

women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: and when they found not his body, they came, saying, That they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Between the revelation of the Lord which was made to Mary Magdalene, and this which was

made to certain disciples on their way to Emmaus, two other appearances are on record, although neither these, nor that to Mary, could have been known to these disciples at the time. This is clear from the account which they gave to the supposed stranger of what had happened. They told of certain women who had seen a vision of angels, and who reported the strange tidings of Jesus being alive; but expressly state that he had not up to the time of their account been seen by any. Mary Magdalene had gone, it may be remembered, very early in the morning, in company with Mary the mother of James and other women to the sepulchre, and on looking at it, found it open, and saw other proofs of the removal of the body. On this she must have left her companions, and hastened with the news to Peter and John. Meantime the other women appear to have examined the sepulchre, to have seen the vision of angels, and lastly to have received the message, as recorded, for the disciples. At the time the two disciples were on their way to Emmaus—at the time rather when they left the assembly of Christians—the only intelligence which could have been received, was the original

statement of Mary Magdalene to Peter and John, that the body had been removed; the subsequent account of the first visit of these latter to the sepulchre in consequence of this statement; and the additional circumstance of the vision of angels, of which some of the women, outstripping their companions, must by this time have informed them[h].

After these disciples had set out for Emmaus, Mary Magdalene may be supposed to have arrived from her second visit to the sepulchre, where she had probably been left by Peter and John when she accompanied them back thither; and to have reported that appearance of the Lord to her which took precedency of all. The women, to whose party she originally belonged, soon after were favoured with a similar revelation; Peter may have been the next to see the Lord, on his going with John a second time to the sepulchre, in consequence of Mary Magdalene's second report. At all events, Peter's revelation

[h] In order to reconcile St. Matthew's statement with St. Luke's, it is necessary to suppose that some of the women ran before their companions with the news; and therefore knew not of the appearance of Jesus to the rest, while *they* were yet on their way.

must have occurred before the return of these two disciples from Emmaus; for they found the assembly full of the report that the Lord had been seen by Peter, that is, by one of *his appointed witnesses.*

If it be asked, how the disciples came to be in assembly at the early hour when the first reports are said to have been brought to them, there is nothing improbable in this supposition. Mary Magdalene, the first who left the sepulchre, carried the news of what she saw there to Peter and John. In consequence of her information, they must have immediately assembled the other apostles; and the congregation thus gradually increased, until the greater number of Christians in Jerusalem were present.

Having thus cleared away the perplexities of the preceding course of events, let us now turn to the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples in their journey to Emmaus. The first point that attracts notice is, that Jesus should have walked so long, and have so long conversed with them, and yet have been unknown to them. The second remarkable fact is, the inward sensation which they describe, by the expression that " their

hearts burned within them;" and which they afterwards thought sufficient to have enabled them, had they attended to it, to discover him.

With respect to the first point, if we look back to the account of Mary Magdalene's revelation, we shall find that she too was as ignorant of the person of Christ as these disciples, and only recognized him by the sound of his voice, or, more probably, by some peculiarity in his well known mode of addressing her. On the present occasion it is expressly said, that the disciples' eyes were holden, that they should not know him. What this miraculous concealment consisted in, it seems neither easy nor needful to determine; but the object obtained by it is more obvious. It might have been designed, in withholding from them all sensible evidence of the reality of the resurrection, to prevent such evidence from superseding the use of that which might have been derived, as surely, from the Law and Prophets. Christ therefore having proved to them *from Scripture* the antecedent certainty of this taking place, they were instructed in the application of a kind of evidence, which, if the Lord had been at first recognized, they might

have been tempted to undervalue and neglect. It conveyed the same lesson as when he said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed[h]." "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe[i]."

As to the internal sensation to which the disciples allude, it was perhaps some mode of divine manifestation, effected by an impression on the mind, which might afterwards serve, when repeated and recognized, as a proof that Christ though unseen, was with them, strengthening them under affliction—suggesting to them or prohibiting them when acting, preaching, or writing—deciding for them when deliberating—in short, it might have been the appropriate vehicle of God's will for many points of guidance and instruction, in their after ministry. Being then given for the first time, it was strange, and its character unknown; although afterwards recognized, familiarized, and boldly acted on. Like Samuel of old, they did not yet *know the Lord* when thus speaking to them; but when afterwards their hearts felt that same inward burning repeated, they would naturally cry out, "Lord, here am I."

[h] John xx. 29. [i] John iv. 48.

CHRIST'S FIRST APPEARANCE TO THE ELEVEN.

(*Fifth appearance.*)

Mark xvi. 14—18.

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Luke xxiv. 36—49.

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was

yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

John xx. 19—25.

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

When Cleopas and his fellow-disciples returned to the assembly which they had left at Jerusalem, and were reporting what had happened to them, Jesus is said to have manifested himself to all present, and to have afforded certain proofs of his bodily resurrection. This is the fifth and the last appearance which is recorded to have been made on the day of the resurrection. That day was the day next to the Jewish sabbath, and consequently answering to our Sunday, the first day of the week. It was on account of our Lord's resurrection on that day, that it was adopted by the Christians for ever after as the weekly day of rest and devotion. On that day week accordingly the disciples were again assembled, when Christ again appeared to them.

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO THE ELEVEN WHEN THOMAS WAS CONVINCED.

(*Sixth Appearance.*)

John xx. 24—29.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord, But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails,

and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Thomas, who had been absent on the former occasion, when Christ appeared to the assembly of disciples, and had refused assent to the accounts given him of the Lord's frequent appearances, now was favoured with the same proofs as the other apostles, that his Master was risen indeed, and expressed his faith in him as his Lord and his God.

Throughout the history of the resurrection, no one point is more observable than the slowness of the apostles to believe the fact, even on the evidence one of another. Many have grounded on it a just argument for the reality of the events; inasmuch as, notwithstanding their previous incredulity, they found grounds

subsequently for believing and maintaining the truth of it; and this in opposition to their own interests, in opposition to the prejudices of the world, and at the risk of their lives. One mode of shaping the argument, however, deserves to be considered, as perhaps lessening its force, while it seems on a cursory glance to increase it. It is not unusually asserted and taken for granted, that the apostles were *incredulous* persons, and slow to believe *any* evidence; and on this supposition is grounded the necessity of acknowledging the reality of the miracles which convinced them. But really, when we come to consider the class of persons to whom the apostles belonged, they are likely to have been very *credulous* persons. Their countrymen were especially credulous. In that very age, they were ready to listen to every impostor, who successively claimed to be the Messiah. Why should we suppose the apostles exempt from this general feeling? Surely they were not exempt from it; nor is it requisite for their credibility to suppose that they were. All that needs to be ascertained in their case, and in the case of any alleged deception which may

arise from credulity, is, whether the deception *favoured their prejudices*, or *ran counter to them*. If the former, then, these witnesses were likely to have been misled through their credulity; if the latter, their credulity would be likely to have made them even indisposed to admit what in justice and candour they ought to have admitted. Credulity is a strong disposition to believe; but to believe what? No one can have a strong disposition to believe contrary statements. He who is credulous with respect to ghosts or witches, is the most incredulous with respect to any explanations which go to destroy the belief in supernatural appearances, and in Satan's extraordinary agency. Now the prejudices, the hopes, the expectations, the *credulity*, in short, of the apostles tended to all those points, which were negatived by our Saviour, in his teaching, his life, his death, and resurrection; and hence it was that they required *more* than enough evidence for an impartial mind. "Unless ye see signs and wonders," said our Lord to them, "ye will not believe." "Except I shall see," said Thomas, "in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not be-

lieve." The apostles were probably credulous, and would have believed on a tenth part of the evidence, had Christ assumed a temporal kingdom. But that very credulity interfered with the belief in his spiritual reign. They were credulous, and would have followed him, adhered to him, and fought and died for him, if he had shewn a disposition to abide with them in the flesh for ever; but that very credulity made them the more eager to forsake him and flee, when he gave himself up to Pilate's judgment. Had their credulity found in Christ a champion for Israel against its enemies and oppressors, one miracle—an apparent miracle—(for it would have been less likely to be examined,) might have tempted them to assent to his claims. But this very credulity dictated the desponding exclamation, "We trusted it had been he who should have redeemed Israel."

Let us not therefore be afraid to look at the weakness of these instruments of Christ, in whom, by means of his constant and unwearied efforts to save them, and, through them, others, his "strength was made perfect." In this point of view, their faith and their preaching are far more

wonderful and unaccountable, (save on the ground of miraculous evidence,) than if we suppose, what we have no right to suppose, that they were exceptions from the mass of uneducated Jews, and singularly incredulous.

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO THE DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS.

(*Seventh Appearance.*)

John xxi. 1—24.

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias: and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,)

and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead[i]. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands,

[i] See note, p. 327.

and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

During the period of forty days which elapsed from the resurrection to the ascension of Christ, he continued to manifest himself on various occasions to his apostles and other disciples. Sometimes he was seen of the apostles only, sometimes of more than the apostles; sometimes by one person, at other times by two or three. Of these appearances the last considered was according to the best calculations the sixth on record, and this at which we are now pausing, the seventh. In all we reckon up eleven; and yet, even these perhaps are only selected from a greater number which might have been requisite for leaving the

testimony of the resurrection sufficiently established and divided amongst his followers, for the wide and scattered portions of mankind on which it was intended to operate. Like the other selections from the immense mass of materials for Gospel history, those which comprise the account of the resurrection must have been chosen with reference to some prominent object contemplated in them, and entitling them to the preference. Accordingly in the remarks which have been made on the preceding instances, there has been an endeavour to point out, what in each case that feature of importance or distinction was likely to have been. In the remaining instances likewise—in most of them at least—it will be easy to do the same. In this appearance of our Lord, for instance, to the disciples at the sea of Galilee, after the preceding manifestations of himself, it is impossible not to recognize a display of certain characteristics, which (as far as the record goes) had not since his resurrection been exhibited, and yet were necessary to be exhibited, in order that his full identity should be proved. Supposing more appearances of a similar import to have been required and given, in order to assure different

apostles; the record of one such was enough *for us;* but without that one, the *recorded* picture of identity, as impressed on their minds by the appearances of the resurrection, would be incomplete. Nothing, it should be borne in mind, was harder to be believed by the disciples, than the truth of Christ's resurrection. The case of Thomas, who continued to hold out in his dissent, notwithstanding the assertion of his fellow disciples that Christ had been seen; notwithstanding the interpretation of the ancient prophecies, which they alleged to have learnt from him during one of his *appearances so asserted;* notwithstanding the recollection too of his frequent predictions concerning himself—the case of Thomas proves this extraordinary incredulity about the resurrection, in whatever way we choose to account for it. In impressing on their minds accordingly a truth so revolting and uncongenial to them—so directly contrary to *their credulity*—our Lord seems to have pursued the same course of gradual and progressive revelation, which so strikingly marked all his preceding ministry. The apostles were his official witnesses, and more especially (according to the emphatic designation occasion-

ally assumed by them) *witnesses of the resurrection*[k]. But how was it they were admitted to the full knowledge of that event to which they were especially to bear testimony? Even by that gradual illumination, which was most likely to be received soberly, candidly, and retentively, in the case of men so circumstanced. On the eye long closed against the light we should produce only distress and indistinctness by admitting a sudden and unexpected blaze of sunshine. The resurrection was made known to the disciples on a similar principle; so that the identity of their Master was a point not at once fully established, but gradually developed. First, his chosen witnesses heard of it from others; next, some of them saw his empty tomb; then, he is himself *merely seen* by one of them. This was the first appeal to the senses, for his identity; and this was followed up by his conversing with them separately and collectively, taking food with them, and allowing and desiring them to handle him; each act being a fuller evidence than the preceding of his being identically the same—their Lord and their God.

[k] Acts ii. 32. iii. 45. x. 41.

And yet there was something still wanting for the assurance of many—a further manifestation, which it was perhaps not unreasonable to require, as it was not thought unfitting that it should be given—a mark of *perfect identity*, which if not missed at first, in the sudden tumult of joy, might yet, if altogether omitted, have proved the occasion of doubt, when he proceeded afterwards to give them their commission, and to invest them with heavenly powers, such as none but God tabernacled in the flesh could have authority to give. *He had yet performed no miracle.* He had proved his identity with the *man* Jesus, and having familiarized their minds with this truth, he now—preparatory to the meeting which he had appointed for the whole body of his witnesses on a mountain in Galilee—he now, at the sea of Tiberias, exhibits marks of his identity as *God in Christ*—as the Immanuel.

Nor let it be said that the apostles needed not all the laboured gradation of discovery. If Thomas, in the warmth of surprise and strong feeling, anticipated the full display of Christ risen, by hailing him as his God as well as his Master, that conviction might have needed afterwards

some deeper root; and if not in Thomas's case, certainly in the case of some. For, notwithstanding the assurance given at the sea of Tiberias, it was at the meeting which followed on the mountain in Galilee, that "some of the persons present doubted."

As to the character of the miraculous display, exhibited at the sea of Tiberias for the purpose now suggested, it was such as was exactly calculated to attain this end. Our Lord's divine nature had been attested by two kinds of superhuman agency—by miracle and by prophecy. In this interview at the sea of Tiberias, he once again displayed both. He caused a miraculous draught of fishes, and he predicted the fate of Peter and John. More—both the miracle and prophecy, or rather one of the prophecies, were so contrived, as to be recognized by the peculiar features which were known to belong only to the miracles and prophecies of Christ. The miracle was symbolical, and its symbolical character readily intelligible by its connection with his many figurative lessons delivered before his death. This was characteristic of Christ's miracles, and of his alone. One of the prophecies—that respecting

John—was, in like manner, at once a test and evidence, and also a warning against error; a prophecy, in short, applied to purposes beyond its prophetical use; and in this respect unlike all prophecies but those of Christ.

To be more explicit. No one who remembers Christ's first call of two of the apostles, and his accompanying hint, "I will make you *fishers* of men," as well as the other allusions and metaphors by which this hint was followed up in Christ's subsequent instructions, can doubt that the miraculous draught of fishes, caused by his presence, after these appointed "fishers of men" had toiled all night in vain, was intended to remind them of those previous metaphorical lessons; perhaps to suggest, as a finish to the series of instruction, that, although hitherto their labours had been, comparatively speaking, unavailing, yet, when he came to them according to his promise, the net which they should cast for the souls of men would be even too small for the multitude which should be ready to be taken[1].

[1] Compare too the parable of the net cast into the sea, one of the lessons by which the apostles were familiarized to the

And when was he to come? This we know was a point about which doubt, even during the apostolic age, was entertained; nor has the Christian world yet ceased to doubt and differ respecting the fulfilment of the declaration. Jesus was then come from the grave, and was bodily amongst them. Although on the cross he had complained that God had forsaken him, and might therefore, without the renewal of his peculiar miracles, have been mistaken for the mere man Jesus, bereft of the indwelling and fulness of the Godhead, yet his perfect identity was now proved. The Christ—God in Christ—was as before manifested, and the manifestation identified by the renewal of his former agency; by a miracle like his former miracles; and by a prophecy no less distinguished as his own. Was he now come? Against this misapprehension his prophecy concerning St. John expressly guarded. He says of him pointedly, "If I will that he tarry *till I come*, what is that to thee?" certainly implying that *he had not yet come*, in the sense in which he had so often and so emphatically promised to come. It may be

use of images drawn from a fisher's employment for the purpose of conveying Gospel instruction.

added, that the same prophecy was a safeguard also against another error respecting Christ's coming; namely, that it meant his final coming to judge the world. For, *at John's death*, those who did labour under such a mistake, would naturally revert to another and a true interpretation.

One remark must not be omitted respecting Peter's conduct on this occasion. He alone proceeded to Jesus on the water[m], whilst the others went in a boat. This was doubtless a display of that improved faith, for want of which, on a former trial, he had begun to sink on that very lake. Having so lately been on the brink of ruin, and having thrice denied his Master, it is natural that this opportunity of shewing his faith should have been given, and eagerly embraced.

[m] The original, ἔβαλεν ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, admits of being rendered either, according to our Bible translation, "cast himself *into* the sea," or "cast himself *upon* the sea." I have adopted the latter as, on the whole, the more probable meaning.

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE ON THE MOUNTAIN IN GALILEE.

(*Eighth appearance.*)

Matth. xxviii. 16—20.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

The great object of Christ's appearances to his disciples must of course have been to satisfy them, and through them all mankind, of his real and full resurrection; his resurrection as to body and soul; and not only so, but the resurrection of the whole man in the same mysterious union as before with the divine nature. It is with a view to this entire and unqualified emancipation of Christ from the effects of death, in opposition to the many fancies which heretics in various ages have indulged respecting the person of the Redeemer, that the second Article of the Church

of England contains that very specific statement of the truth impressed on the apostles' minds, "two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and the manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided."

In what way this truth was gradually established by the successive appearances on record has been now considered. But there was one to follow, which, from the history, would seem to have been of greater importance than all. From the first vision at the sepulchre, the angels pointed to a meeting which Christ was to give his apostles on a mountain in Galilee. To the first persons whom he honoured with a manifestation he delivered the same message; charging the apostles to prepare themselves for this interview. Before it took place, he had, from time to time, visited them collectively and separately; nor was the great meeting given, until the whole truth of his real and entire resurrection had been disclosed. It is natural to seek then for the peculiar object and importance of the interview between Christ and his apostles on the mountain of Galilee.

First then it is to be observed, that although

Christ had gradually manifested his entire nature, it may be, to all his apostles, since his resurrection; yet some might have been present on one occasion, some on another, so that an official summons and an appointed hour of meeting might have been requisite to secure the attendance and the evidence of all to the account in which they were afterwards to agree, whether in preaching or framing a document for after ages. It is said indeed, more than once, that the eleven were assembled when he appeared; yet on one of these occasions, we know that Thomas was absent. The apostles were emphatically called the "eleven," or more commonly "the twelve," and a meeting of "the eleven" or "the twelve," or "the apostles," would no more imply the presence of every member of the apostolic body, than a meeting of a vestry would imply the attendance of every member of the vestry. At all events, their presence *as a body*, from which no one should be absent, could only have been accidental; and it was at least more fitting and reasonable, that they should on some one occasion be formally assembled, to receive as a body that evidence of which they were the joint depositaries.

In the next place, what display of Christ's return among them as the Immanuel—as perfect man and perfect God—was given on the mountain in Galilee, is not specified. Whether, on that mountain, besides hearing and seeing him, they witnessed some display of his glory, like to that on the mountain of transfiguration, we are not told; but it is certainly said, that before he came up to them and entered into communication with them, they saw enough to make them worship him. And this is the more remarkable, because, on the other occasions, they seemed to require some hints and proofs, in order to enable them even to recognize him.

Lastly, more than the display of his full emancipation from the effects of the grave must have been contemplated in this interview. For, after having been seen and worshipped by the apostles, he proceeded to give them that great commission, which, probably even more than the display of himself, was the purport of their general summons to attend him. He now declared to them in what *name*[m] God was to be worshipped, in the

[m] On the use of the word *name*, as applied to God's revelation of himself, I have made some remarks in my

name of the blessed Trinity, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost[n]." And this circumstance will explain, why—supposing (as was done, in some of the preceding remarks) that Mary Magdalene on a former occassion attempted to worship him —why he forbad her by saying, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father," whereas he now received the homage of all his apostles without interrupting them. Mary Magdalene was, we supposed, acting under a false apprehension that "Christ's coming" was now accomplished. To her, no more was done, than to correct this wrong impression, by reminding her of one of his former declarations, which was inconsistent with her notion. To have entered into a fuller explanation, would have anticipated that which he had reserved for this scene; for the meeting on the mountain of Galilee, which he accordingly bade her tell his apostles to prepare for. Here, upon their wor-

History of Christianity, (vol. i. p. 150.) which the reader may consult.

[n] Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

shipping him in a body, he clears up their view of his coming as the object of their worship; not by forbidding the adoration, (which indeed he had only forbidden to her, it would seem, because it was a *sign of error*, and not as in itself improper,) but by explaining to them how he was henceforth to be worshipped. He confirms their view, that he was to be their Lord and God for ever; but reminds them, by the prescribed form of initiation into his Church, that, as he had come from the Father, and was the Son, so there was yet a third Person—the Holy Spirit—a third manifestation of that same God—by whom he was to come and rule his Church. "All power is given unto *me* in heaven and in earth. Go ye, *therefore*, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and, lo, I am *with you alway* even unto the end of the world."

CHRIST SEEN OF MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN AT ONCE.

(*Ninth Appearance.*)

1 Cor. xv. 6.

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

If this appearance be a different one from that made on the mountain in Galilee, it is the ninth on record. That it is the same however will appear probable from the numbers assembled, which at that early period—before the descent of the Holy Ghost—may be best accounted for by some previously arranged plan of meeting for an important object; such as was the appointment to meet the Lord on this mountain of Galilee. The eleven are indeed especially named as present at that meeting, because to them the commission to preach and baptize was immediately given. But it seems scarcely possible, that, known as the summons was so long before, the eleven only should have been present; unless all others were prohibited, and of this there is no notice. Perhaps indeed our Lord's purpose, in delaying the formal hour of meeting, might have been, that the appointment should be generally known to his disciples, and that those of them who had fled and dispersed beyond Judæa on his crucifixion, might have time and opportunity to hear of his intended interview with the eleven, and be present as assistant witnesses. For the same reason a mountain in Galilee, rather than

any part of Judæa, might have been the place appointed for the meeting. Had any spot in Judæa been talked of as the place, the Jews might possibly have heard of it, and have taken measures to interrupt the meeting. At all events, their suspicions would have been awakened, and their inquiries put on the alert, by the influx of more than five hundred obnoxious persons towards any given point in Judæa; although the movements of the eleven could hardly (as was in fact proved at the ascension) excite any alarm.

If it be however a different appearance, it is only noticed by St. Paul; who states, that most of those present on the occasion were living witnesses at the time of his writing. In either view, the purpose for which Christ manifested himself to so large a body of his disciples, besides his appointed witnesses, was probably this. In the first propagation of the Gospel, almost all the original disciples must have been needed as preachers of the word—so wide was the field of conversion, which was suddenly thrown open to the Church. So spoke the Spirit of God by the Psalmist, when he exclaimed with reference to that extraordinary

period, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it[n]." Now for those so employed, no accidental qualification could have been more desirable, than the circumstance of having seen Christ after his resurrection; since on this turned the whole weight of their Gospel report. Besides which, by thus bringing together more than five hundred of his disciples before his ascension, our Lord not only furnished them with a very valuable qualification for the ministry; but set them on communicating as a body. To this it may no doubt be attributed, that they were found in so large numbers on the day of Pentecost, ready for the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost. Prepared at once by the privilege of being eye-witnesses of the resurrection, and also by the eminent endowments, which seem to have been bestowed by the manifestation on that day, they constituted a class of disciples qualified, beyond all the future ordinary converts, for immediate appointments; and out of these, no doubt, went forth the first promulgators of the faith, Matthias and Barnabas, Stephen and Philip, and others named and unnamed in the inspired annals.

[n] Psalm lxviii. 11.

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO JAMES (*tenth appearance*) AND TO PETER (*third appearance*).

1 Cor. xv. 5, 7.

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.—— After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

Of Christ's appearance to St. Peter, some notice was taken among the earlier manifestations to which it belongs. Besides St. John's notice of it, St. Paul also enumerates it in his list, and adds a separate interview with one other individual apostle not noticed in the histories, St. James. Why these two apostles should have been selected for what would seem a mark of favour and honour, cannot certainly be determined. That St. James the Less was afterwards, according to uninspired but very authentic accounts, bishop of Jerusalem, the mother Church, and the scene of our Lord's own ministry; whilst St. Peter was the first preacher, both to the Jews and to the devout Gentiles—the foundation-stone of the Church—are circumstances in the history of these two apostles, which may seem to make such a distinction suitable. They might have

needed, it may be conjectured, some favour of this sort to sanction their authority. But really we have no traces of any such imaginable connection between the honour vouchsafed these two apostles and their several destinations. It is more probable that it was James the Elder who was thus favoured; and that it was only an additional instance of that preference which Christ had, on several occasions, shewn to him conjointly with St. Peter and St. John. They only were present, it may be remembered, at his transfiguration. They were selected from the whole number to witness his first miracle of restoring the dead to life. They too were called on to attend and sympathize with him in the most distressing scene of his ministry—his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. This view will leave unexplained indeed the ground on which that preference was shewn; but it prevents the difficulty from being considered as one peculiar to the account of the resurrection.

And if this distinction shewn towards St. James and St. Peter be considered as part of a preference established during Christ's ministry, and exhibited in former instances, it will not imply that

St. John, who formerly shared in this preference with the other two, was excluded from it after the resurrection. St. James and St. Peter were indeed selected for individual interviews, and not so perhaps St. John; but for him alone it was reserved to witness Christ's great coming in the establishment of his spiritual reign. As if to point to this intended compensation too, it was made the subject of a distinct prophecy; and of the importance and gratifying character of the favour, no words can give a livelier idea than the enraptured language of the apostle himself, when hailing the event on its near approach: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus[o]."

CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

(*Eleventh and last Appearance.*)

Mark xvi. 19, 20. Luke xxiv. 50—52. Acts i. 1—11.
(See also 1 Cor. xv. 7.)

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs fol-

[o] Revelations xxii. 20.

lowing. Amen.——And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him.——The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, Ye have heard of me: for John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up

from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Supposing the preceding manifestation to have been the tenth, there will remain this one more, which included in its circumstances the ascension. With this, therefore, as the last which took place before the descent of the Holy Ghost, and as attended by the significative act of ascending, the history of the resurrection may be properly concluded. With this too will be concluded "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" in its strictest and most confined limits; summed up as it is in the apostolic language by "Jesus and the resurrection."

Christ is said to have met his apostles in Jerusalem; to have led them forth as far as Bethany; and there, in their presence, to have ascended into the heavens. The propriety and need of this formal departure is very evident. He had so frequently, from the day of his resurrection up to that moment, visited the apostles and others of his disciples and again departed, that it was quite requisite to fix, by some significative action, that departure which was to be final—final, I mean, as related to his manifestation in the flesh,

for the purpose of assuring his witnesses of the resurrection, to which they were to bear testimony. From this period his followers were no longer to expect his guidance and comfort in the flesh, but another Comforter was to come,—the Holy Spirit. Him, the Immanuel, "the heavens were to receive until the times of restitution of all things [p]."

In reading the account of this transaction, there is one false impression, against which some may require to be cautioned. It is this. Christ was seen *ascending* into the heavens; and so an indistinct notion is sometimes formed, that the Godhead in Christ was subject to the local accident of ascending with his body, and again of descending with the mysterious tongues of flame on the day of Pentecost. But of course God must at all times be equally *omnipresent;* or, rather, He cannot be subject to locality, and is, properly speaking, *in no place.* When therefore he is said to come or to go—to ascend or descend—to visit the world or to depart from it—these expressions can only mean, that He has ceased to be manifested—that he has begun again to be

[p] Acts iii. 23.

manifested—that he has ceased to operate on us —that he has begun to do so—and the like. In the present instance, the visible and bodily ascent of Christ into the heavens, could only be an expressive symbol that God was ceasing to be manifested in the person of Jesus Christ; and, in like manner, the opposite symbol of descending fiery tongues, signified that God was beginning to be manifested in a new way, even by the Holy Spirit.

Whenever grosser notions steal upon your mind—and whose is the mind on which they do not sometimes operate?—ask yourselves the question, Whither was Christ seen to ascend by the apostles, the witnesses of the ascension? To the heavens; that is, to the sky. But where is *heaven?* Not surely in the atmosphere, that surrounds this world: it is not surely a place bounded by the lines of the astronomer or the geographer. Heaven, the abode of God, is not a place, but that of which a magnificent object like the sky is a type and shadow. It is by analogy that we thus ascribe to God, what is essential to the well being of a man; but one less enlightened than the least in God's present kingdom addressed

him nobly when he said, "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have builded [p]."

[p] 1 Kings viii. 27.

THE END.

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